

## ABSTRACT



# **The Problem of the Enlightenment Salon**

**European History or Post-Revolutionary Politics  
1755-1850**

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## ABSTRACT

In the last twenty-five years, many historians have focused on the *salon* as a nexus of Enlightenment France, describing the institution as one of the 'origins of the French Revolution' and as 'central' to an understanding of modern French and European societies.

In my thesis, I challenge this widely accepted argument and propose that our understanding of this institution must be revised. I demonstrate that the *salon* story is a nineteenth-century phenomenon rather than an eighteenth-century institution. I begin by demonstrating that the category of the *salon* has been used anachronistically and was not employed by the so-called *salonnières* (i.e. Vichy du Deffand, Lespinasse, Geoffrin) or its members (i.e. Morellet, Delille, d'Alembert) in their extensive correspondence, of which thousands of letters are extant. Eighteenth-century individuals would be astonished and confused to learn that they held and participated in a *salon* institution.

Rather, the concept – with its definitions of female-led gatherings in formal interiors – emerges in nineteenth-century published sources, particularly post-Revolutionary memoirs, which are narratives largely shaped by nostalgia and contemporary political partisanship. Often written by individuals who sought to revise views of the *ancien régime* with stories of a glorious past, these narratives buttressed their attempts to affect political change. Historians' overemphasis on these readily accessible sources has led to their reification of the *salon* and the attendant acceptance of such nineteenth-century conceptualisations of eighteenth-century lives.

It is the purpose of this thesis to analyse this historical problem, to study the evolving forms and functions of these eighteenth-century individuals' lives, and to investigate the development of this nineteenth-century mythmaking. At its conclusion, a clear distinction will emerge between the everyday practices of these eighteenth-century individuals and the *salon* idealisation created during the nineteenth century.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	2
List of Illustrations	4
Acknowledgments	6
I. Historiographical claims about the French <i>salon</i>	7
a. A proto-democratic society in eighteenth-century Paris	
b. From passive hosts to purposeful directors	
c. The popularity of this social ideal	
II. Challenging the classic narrative of the Enlightenment <i>salon</i>	54
a. Examining the usage of nineteenth- and twentieth-century documents	
b. Problems with overreliance on these published sources	
c. Searching in vain for these <i>salons</i>	
III. Examining the everyday lives of Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin	102
a. The nights of Vichy du Deffand	
b. The business and commercial life of Geoffrin	
c. Discovering and experiencing Chanteloup	
IV. Creating the <i>salon</i> rooms: material culture and cosmopolitan sociability	144
a. Architectural formation, competition, and development	
b. Sensational rooms and speaking architecture: <i>salons</i> , <i>salles</i> , <i>sallettes</i> ,	
c. Confiscation and transformation of <i>ancien régime</i> spaces	
V. Writing and visualising the <i>salon</i> story in the nineteenth century	184
a. Lemonnier and his imagined 1755 gatherings	
b. Morellet and Delille's odes to pre-Revolutionary lives	
c. Bringing the story into practice: Junot and Ancelot	
Bibliography	
Archival	237
Primary	254
Secondary	293
Illustrations	363

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- |   |            |
|---|------------|
| <p>1) Portrait of <i>La Marquise du Vichy du Deffand</i>, anonymous,<br/>circa 1730<br/>held in the collection of Yale University</p>   | <p>363</p> |
| <p>2) Portrait of <i>Madame Geoffrin dans son cabinet</i>, 1773<br/>held in the collection of the Musée de Valence, reproduced in<br/>Paula Rea Radisich, <i>Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the<br/>Enlightenment</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)</p>                               | <p>364</p> |
| <p>3) Gabriel-Hippolyte Alexandre Destailleur, <i>Château de<br/>Chanteloup</i>, circa 1775<br/>held in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale</p>  | <p>365</p> |
| <p>4) Jouvin de Rochefort Map, 1676<br/>reproduced in Michael Dennis, <i>Court and Garden:<br/>From the French Hôtel to the City of Modern Architecture</i><br/>(Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986)</p>  | <p>366</p> |
| <p>5) Jaillot Map, 1775<br/>reproduced in Michael Dennis, <i>Court and Garden:<br/>From the French Hôtel to the City of Modern Architecture</i><br/>(Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986)</p>  | <p>367</p> |
| <p>6) Interior of Dining Room, Hôtel de Botterel-Quintin,<br/>circa 1770<br/>reproduced in <i>Les Vieux hôtels de Paris: décorations<br/>extérieures et intérieurs</i> (Paris, 1922)</p>  | <p>368</p> |
| <p>7) Interior of Antichambre and Dining Room, unknown hôtel,<br/>circa 1780<br/>print by Van Cleemputte, reproduced in Pierre Verlet,<br/><i>French Furniture and Interior Decoration of the 18<sup>th</sup><br/>Century</i>, translated by George Savage (London: Barnie and<br/>Rockliffe, 1967)</p> | <p>368</p> |
| <p>8) Interior of Dining Room, Hôtel Guimard, 1771<br/>held in the collection of the Royal Institute of<br/>British Architects</p>  | <p>368</p> |



9) Exterior and Interior of Hôtel Guimard, 1771 reproduced in Michael Dennis, <i>Court and Garden: From the French Hôtel to the City of Modern Architecture</i> (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986)	369
10) Exterior and Interior of the Pavillon Bagatelle, 1777 held in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale	370
11) Dolphin Fountain in the Dining Room of the Hôtel Châtelet, circa 1770 remains at the Hôtel Châtelet, rue de Varenne	371
12) Venus Stove in the Dining Room of the Château du Marais, circa 1787 remains at the Château du Marais, St. Chéron	372
13) Anicet-Charles-Gabriel Lemonnier, <i>Première lecture de l'Orphelin de la Chine de Voltaire dans le salon de madame Geoffrin</i> , 1812 held in the collection of the Rouen Museum	373
14) Carmontelle, Portrait of Vichy du Deffand, circa 1812 reproduced in J.G. Cotta, editor, <i>Almanach des dames, pour l'an 1813</i> (Paris and Fuchs: Levrault Frères, 1813)	374
15) Robineau, Portrait of Geoffrin, circa 1812 reproduced in J.G. Cotta, editor, <i>Almanach des dames, pour l'an 1813</i> (Paris and Fuchs: Levrault Frères, 1813)	375
16) Marguerite-Virginie Ancelot, Paintings of her <i>salon</i> , 1824 reproduced in Marguerite-Virginie Ancelot, <i>Un Salon de Paris. 1824 à 1864</i> (Paris: E. Dentu, 1866)	376

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## **Historiographical claims about the French *salon***

Scholars have long been fascinated with the French *salon*, an institution that has been described as regular gatherings of individuals for the purposes of engaging in free thinking, proto-political debate, and constructive criticism. Many prominent historians have characterised the *salons* as ideal places of intellectual production, a form of sociability that emerged in the decades immediately preceding the French Revolution. Over the course of several years, on fixed days and at set hours, the most enlightened individuals – a mix of academicians, city leaders, and international visitors – met behind closed doors in Parisian houses. These settings provided the privacy needed to evade royal eavesdroppers lurking in cafés, lodges, and academies. It was in these secure locations that participants established their independent positions, tested their philosophical innovations, and shaped the attitudes that led to the French Revolution.

Several academics have analysed the exceptional origins of the *salon*, whereby a few elite women set out to create a new institution, taking considerable risk to transform their homes from sites of leisured sociability into serious working places. They have studied the unique steps these women took to assert their political independence from the aristocratic men who had long

dominated the public realm of France (and Europe), and have elaborated on the economic and social lengths that these women went to in order to ensure its success. In detailing how these *salonnières* selected the themes, priorities, and participants, scholars have accorded these leaders a high degree of historical significance for the *salon's* considerable results.

According to leading scholars of the phenomenon, the leadership and location of the *salons* attracted a diverse range of participants, including those who had been excluded from the official corridors of power. The *salonnières* decided who they would allow into their homes based on the criteria of intellectual promise, rather than social distinction. Therefore, it became irrelevant whether the potential participant was a fledgling writer or the largest land-holding duke. The result was a gathering organised around ideas, where an egalitarian spirit prevailed over traditional hierarchies of authority. It was a novel type of arrangement, with a high degree of social mobility among the *ordres*, an alternative model to the corporate structure of royal society. During the hours of the *salon*, these individuals escaped from the status quo and began imagining themselves as part of a radically different kind of political body.

Neither a legislature, nor an academy, nor a royal court, this group of individuals functioned as the Enlightenment *salon*. So dominant did the participants become that they emerged as the leading arbiters and political actors of their era, displacing even the



royal courts that migrated between Versailles, Fontainebleau, and the rural residences of the monarchy. Their model of public opinion, emerging from *salon* conversation, overtook the displays of power provided by the king and his circles. Intellectual and cultural renewal gathered momentum: change, progress, and liberal thought came to be valued; finely crafted theories of reason and merit took hold; and confidence in individual achievement became highly esteemed. Their innovative ideas eventually swayed public opinion in favour of egalitarian ideologies – not just in their own city, but well beyond. Collectively, their ideas brought about radical reform in their own country, which ultimately shaped the revolutionary ideology of the late eighteenth century and led to the birth of the modern world.

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However, there is a problem with this widely accepted argument, and it is the purpose of this thesis to propose a different understanding of the *salon*. As this study will demonstrate, in the eighteenth century, a *salon* was not a social institution, or even a type of gathering, but rather a novel style of room. In other words, a *salon* was a physical setting and an architectural innovation in the eighteenth century. It is important that we take this into account and thus materialise our understanding of eighteenth-century sociability.

This questioning of the Enlightenment *salon* is not intended to challenge the vast majority of research on elite sociability in eighteenth-century France. Scholars like Robert Darnton, Marc Fumaroli, Margaret Jacob, Sarah Maza, and Daniel Roche, among others, have conceptualised elite networking and interaction in vivid and lively descriptions. From their body of work, we can gain a clear understanding of a wide range of sociability as seen from a diverse range of perspectives including literary circles, aristocratic networking, social clubs, popular culture, and material objects.<sup>1</sup>

Instead, this thesis is focused on reframing our understanding of the eighteenth-century *salon*. This will include

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<sup>1</sup> See Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); Marc Fumaroli, *L'Art de la conversation: anthologie* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1997); Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981); Sarah C. Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Daniel Roche, *Les Républicains des lettres: gens de culture et Lumières au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1988). In addition, see Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire and Margaret C. Jacob, *L'Espace des francs-maçons: une sociabilité européenne au XVIIIe siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003); Gregory S. Brown, *A Field of Honor: Writers, Court Culture, and Public Theater in French Literary Life from Racine to the Revolution*, Gutenberg e-text (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Roger Chartier, *Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, Translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Etienne Françoise, editor, *Sociabilité et société bourgeoisie en France, en Allemagne et en Suisse, 1750-1850* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1986); David Garrioch, *Neighbourhood and Community in Paris, 1740-1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Mimi Hellman, 'Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century France', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32:4 (1999): 415-445; Frank A. Kafker, *The Encyclopedists as a Group: A Collective Biography of the Authors of the Encyclopédie* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996); Alan Charles Kors, *D'Holbach's Coterie: An Enlightenment in Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).



an analysis of the process by which pre-Revolutionary practices were reimagined, reconstructed, and ultimately reified as the *salon* institution in the nineteenth century. Specific individuals – beginning with certain aging academicians who lost their prominent positions during the 1789 Revolution – promoted an idyllic view of eighteenth-century Parisian life. They presented detailed pictures of refined intellectual sociability; these images challenged the characterisation of the *ancien régime* as a decadent society headed by a debauched hereditary elite. To counter this popular impression, they took pains to provide their perspectives and memories of the decades preceding the 1789 Revolution. Through their creative output, they sought to repair this image; with their portrayals, these individuals sowed the initial seeds of an ideal *salon* institution. Their personal histories, shared efforts, and contradictions with their earlier accounts, all point to the imaginative quality of their story.

This thesis also provides an in-depth discussion of eighteenth-century individuals historically singled out as '*salonnières*' and '*salon*' members. We will examine the problem of historians' consistent *salon* descriptions, which has given the mistaken appearance that there was a unified vocabulary of the '*salon*' in the eighteenth century. It will be important to consider that as much as recent language about this *salon* has been fixed, the contemporary descriptions of Parisian gatherings were variable. Elite Parisians would be puzzled to learn that they were

memorialised as '*salon* members', and the so-called '*salonnières*' would be astonished to learn that they held *salons*.

Linked to this reconsideration will be analyses of the two individuals historically singled out as the Enlightenment '*salonnières*': Marie Vichy du Deffand and Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin. Since the nineteenth century until now, it is these two women who have been described as the leaders and/or leading hostesses of the Enlightenment *salon*. While other women have occasionally been described as taking on a '*salonnière*' role in French historiography, they have not been placed on par with Vichy du Deffand or Geoffrin as the leading Enlightenment '*salonnières*'. Given their importance in *salon* history, it will be particularly important to examine their everyday lives and practices.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> As early as 1813, the editor and publisher Johann Cotta presented Marie Vichy du Deffand and Marie Thérèse Geoffrin as important *ancien régime* individuals, noting the charm of Vichy du Deffand and the simplicity of Geoffrin in *Almanach des dames, pour l'an 1813* (Paris and Fuchs: Levrault Frères, 1813): especially 6-12. These two women were the only two individuals singled out in Emile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française* (Paris: L. Hachette, 1872) for holding salons in the *ancien régime*. While this pair has stood at the forefront of the Enlightenment *salon* historiography in the twentieth-century (and are discussed in great detail later in this chapter and in Chapter 3), there are a few other individuals that are worthy of mention. Julie de Lespinasse, the niece of Vichy du Deffand, has occasionally been cited as a *salonnière* of the Enlightenment period, a characterisation elaborated on in Chapter 3. Anne-Thérèse de Marguenat-de-Courcelles (also known as the marquise de Lambert) has been described as teaching Geoffrin about conversation and networking and providing the ingredients for Geoffrin's '*salon*'.



It is also worthwhile to emphasise that both Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin participated in typical eighteenth-century elite networking, defined as interacting or engaging in informal communication with others for mutual assistance or support.<sup>3</sup> Like many of their acquaintances and associates, they participated in the standard forms of sociability of their era. In her home, Vichy du Deffand enjoyed bringing friends together for evenings full of games and amusements, and described the gatherings as places of pleasure and companionship. Vichy du Deffand frequently attended others' *soupers*, *dîners*, *maisons ouvertes*, *pots royaux*, garden *fêtes*, card games, and amateur theatricals. Geoffrin, too, participated in the parties of her friends, and particularly enjoyed

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Anne-Louise-Germaine Necker (also known as the baroness de Staël-Holstein) has been described as inheriting the '*salon*' from Enlightenment leaders Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin and carrying on the tradition in the nineteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin were not part of 'court society' as it has been defined. Neither held a rank of nobility that granted her a role in the regular activities of court, or their Parisian extension as led by such families as Artois, Breteuil, Conti, Lafayette, Maine, and Noailles. The term, 'court society', was popularised by Norbert Elias, and is typically associated with the earlier period of the Louis XIV court. For further studies on aristocratic networking and 'court society', see François Bluche, *La Noblesse française au XVIIIe siècle: la vie quotidienne* (Paris: Hachette, 1995); Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *La Noblesse au XVIIIe siècle, de la féodalité aux Lumières* (Paris: Hachette, 1976); Arnaud de Maurepas, *Les Français vus par eux-mêmes: le XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Robert Laffant, 1996).

communicating with friends regarding the arts, offering advice on cultural patronage.

Neither woman envisioned herself as a *salon* leader, *salonnière*, or even at the centre of elite networking, yet both are historically compelling for other reasons. In the case of Vichy du Deffand, the extant evidence is so detailed and extensive that it provides an exceptional case study of a woman's everyday life in eighteenth-century Paris. Geoffrin's lead ownership in a major corporation provides a highly unusual example of a woman's large-business leadership in the eighteenth century.

### **A proto-democratic society in eighteenth-century Paris**

The definition of the Enlightenment *salon*, so widely known and accepted today, did not firmly take hold among scholars until the second half of the twentieth century. For more than 150 years, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the concept of the eighteenth-century *salon* as a force for change was widely accepted among an elite public in Europe and the United States, but it was almost universally dismissed by scholars as historically insignificant. In fact, it was often seen as yet another example of a corrupt aristocracy. These earlier generations of scholars granted the institution's existence, but they characterised it as a traditional form of elite sociability, more closely resembling the pomp and circumstance of court society



than an open society with modern characteristics. Deemed a subject unworthy of serious study, prominent scholars felt it was better left to amateur historians and genealogists who hoped to rehabilitate *ancien régime* society, and with it, their aristocratic ancestors.

For example, Sorbonne professor Daniel Mornet took up the subject briefly in the early twentieth century, only to later dismiss it as a frivolous subject. In a series of lectures that he gave at *l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Sociales* (which were published in 1914), Mornet expressed his concern that some elite Parisians had been developing the idea that *salons* were a powerful, constructive force in the eighteenth century. While he noted that some nineteenth-century writers had attempted to bestow a seriousness of purpose to the *salons*, Mornet argued that such rhetoric should not be accepted as truth. He set out to clarify that matter in strong and certain terms. Mornet dismissed the notion that the *salon* consisted of anything more than evenings of light entertainment, taking place in the elegant and refined interiors of Parisian *hôtels*. While he believed that intellectuals had attempted to use the *salon* to debate without interference, he described how they found this impossible due to the meddling of the women who sought to govern their exchange. Accusing the *salon* of being too exclusive and rigid, Mornet described the institution as a hurdle to be overcome, visited only when necessary because the life of *le*

*monde* 'makes fashionable a disdain for the serious life and for the scruples of work and meditation.'<sup>4</sup>

An outsider to the French academic community, German philosopher Jürgen Habermas had a significantly different perspective. Habermas trumpeted the merits of the *salon* in the history of France and Europe, as part of his now well-known theory of the emerging public sphere in eighteenth-century Europe, set forth in 1962. He posited that the growth of dense urban

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Mornet, *La Vie Parisienne au XVIIIe siècle: Leçons faites à l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes Sociales* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1914): 3-27.

Kingsley Martin, a British academic, shared this concern for the obstacles created by the *salons*; he concluded that 'the really important work of the century was done away from the salons;' see Martin, *French Liberal Thought in the Eighteenth Century: A Study of Political Ideas From Bayle to Condorcet* (London: E. Benn Limited, 1929): especially 103-116 which includes references to Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin. A considerable softening of this view may be seen in the works of Roger Picard, a professor at the Université de Lille, and an expatriate in New York from World War II. In his introduction to *Les Salons littéraires et la société française, 1610-1789* (New York: Brentano's, 1946): especially 329-351 and for discussion of Vichy du Deffand: 231-258; Picard proposed a reconsideration of this 'out of season' subject, calling for a revision of the portrayal of the *salon* as a frivolous entity characterised by a superficial *esprit*. In its place, he suggested that the *salon* be placed at the heart of French identity. Where else, he asked, had there been such elegant meetings of international society, uniting people from different nations for the sole joy of exchanging their ideas? He asserted that at no other time or place had such a well-mannered, ideal institution existed. In sum, he declared *la vie salon* to be an exceptional French entity, one which represented the best aspects of the French national character. It was time, he wrote, to recognise and to herald the *salon* institution of France.



centres provided enhanced opportunities for interpersonal communication and exchange, and sparked the development of new loci of interaction, such as the Enlightenment *salon*. In addition to *salons*, he also cited book clubs and coffee houses, among others, as providing social spaces for new rational and critical debate.<sup>5</sup>

Habermas described how the formation of this polite and informed public overcame economic and social differences to unite people in common principles, ultimately obstructing the unbridled and destructive force of state authority. With the emergence of the *salon* and other like-minded places, the absolutist state's hierarchies were challenged, and a new order of reciprocal and equal exchange developed and self-possession, rationality, and freedom triumphed. Dictators were replaced by debate; secrecy was undermined by publicity. Ultimately, Habermas argued, these formations produced the individuals and ideology that coalesced in revolutionary activity.

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<sup>5</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated from *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit; Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. (Neuwied: H. Luchterhand, 1962), by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989). The German philosopher Reinhart Koselleck has also presented an elaborate theory of the Enlightenment and public opinion in *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998), translated from *Kritik und Krise; ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der bürgerlichen Welt* (Freiburg: K. Alber, 1959).

Habermas moved the subject beyond the internal debates of France. He placed the *salon* among academic discourses of citizenship, political life, and democracy. Making strange bedfellows with the political right, Habermas joined them in idealising *salon* sociability, but he offered an entirely different framework for understanding its historical role. The *salon*, he argued, served as a site of opposition to aristocratic culture, one that strove to break free of the monarchical stranglehold and to establish an egalitarian society. He accepted neither of the popular views of the *salon* – as a setting for despotic and dissolute behaviour, or the alternate perspective that this institution fostered French harmony and accomplishment.

This was a considerable revision, and the work became a touchstone for scholars working in many different areas. An elite, exclusive institution had been recast as a proto-democratic society, one in which individuals disregarded status and engaged in lively debate and exchange, thus developing the kinds of skills that paved the way for an active democracy. *Bons mots* became early-stage revolutionary rhetoric; elegant conversation was transformed into supreme reason. Old-style *corps* society was replaced by an open, modern democracy. Previously disregarded practices were legitimised as important historical phenomena, placed on par with conventional political, military, and economic histories.

The overall success of Habermas' career, from this widely-translated monograph on the public sphere to the subsequent



publications on communication theories and public exchange, played a large role in the acceptance of his argument. Since that first book, Habermas has produced a considerable body of work. This proliferation led to his high visibility and influence in multiple disciplines – not only history, but also literature and art history. Habermas' ideas, so convincingly argued, transformed the *salon* idea and inspired many scholars to locate rational discourses in this institution. Widely thought to be the most influential scholar in the transformation of the historical interpretation of the Enlightenment *salon*, Habermas has inspired the work of many scholars in the past decades.<sup>6</sup>

French scholars expanded on the idea of the *salon* as a significant political institution. In the 1970s and 1980s, historian François Furet found considerable value in the idea of the *salon* as

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<sup>6</sup> For further elaboration on the emerging public sphere in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, see Craig Calhoun, editor, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); Daniel Gordon, 'Philosophy, Sociology, and Gender in the Enlightenment Conception of Public Opinion;' David A. Bell, 'The 'Public Sphere', the State, and the World of Law in Eighteenth-Century France'; Sarah Maza, 'Women, the Bourgeoisie and the Public Sphere: Response to Daniel Gordon and David Bell'; in 'Forum: The Public Sphere in the Eighteenth Century,' *French Historical Studies* 17:4 (1992): 882-911, 912-934, 935-950; Anthony J. La Vopa, 'Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe,' *Journal of Modern History* 64 (March 1992): 79-116; Benjamin Nathans, 'Habermas's 'Public Sphere' in the Era of the French Revolution,' *French Historical Studies* 16 (Spring 1990): 621-644. For an overview of this phenomenon, see William Beik, T.C.W. Blanning, and James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

a significant factor in the emergence of modern democracy. In his view, the *salon* – and comparable places of sociability such as *cafés* and lodges – were nascent democratic arenas where like-minded individuals formed new collectives that, over time, weakened the traditional identities of lineage and corporation.<sup>7</sup> Drawing attention to these places of early democratic sociability, Furet aimed to reignite a spirit of voluntary association in his era. In so doing, he intended to form a group that would challenge the reigning communist ideology of his intellectual community and replace it with democratic ideals and liberal orientation. With this

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<sup>7</sup> For some related analyses of public opinion, see Arlette Farge, *Dire et mal dire: l'opinion publique au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Seuil, 1992); *Subversive Words: Public Opinion in Eighteenth-Century France*, translated by Rosemary Morris (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). Several scholars have analysed the development of public opinion in eighteenth-century masonic lodges, including Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire and Margaret Jacob, *L'Espace des francs-maçons: Une sociabilité Européen au XVIIIe siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2003); James Smith Allen, 'Sisters of Another Sort: Freemason Women in Modern France, 1725-1940,' *Journal of Modern History*, 75:4 (December 2003): 783-836; Janet M. Burke and Margaret C. Jacob, 'French Freemasonry, Women, and Feminist Scholarship,' *Journal of Modern History* 68:3 (1996): 513-549; Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Ran Halévi, *Les Loges maçonniques dans la France d'ancien régime: aux origines de la sociabilité démocratique* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1984), who asserted that these new social groups also played an important role in resisting oppression; Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1981).



re-energised organisation, Furet hoped to establish 'laboratories for the production of new values,' similar to the *salons* that blossomed in the eighteenth century, so that France would once again thrive.<sup>8</sup>

Writing in the same era, historian Maurice Agulhon also cited the contribution of the *salon*, particularly within the context of the importance of voluntary organisations in creating an egalitarian society. The *salon*, he wrote, had once been organised in private houses, to regularly receive friends and to form *leur société*; as a result, he argued, this life of the *salon* created concentric circles that ultimately established powerful ensembles that were able to avoid the oppression of the state and corporative milieu. In Agulhon's view, the *salon* evolved from everyday practice into a political institution, one which demonstrated the authority of purposeful sociability. Like Furet and Habermas, he envisioned the *salon* as an historical model for constructive political activity and affirmed the utility of resurrecting the idea for contemporary purposes.<sup>9</sup>

A prolific academician, Marc Fumaroli shared Furet and Agulhon's fascination with the *salon*, but for different reasons.

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<sup>8</sup> François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, translated by Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), especially 37-39; John H. Boyer, Sheila Fitzpatrick, and Jan E. Goldstein, editors, 'New Work on the Old Regime and the French Revolution: A Special Issue in Honor of François Furet,' *Journal of Modern History* 72:1 (March 2000).

<sup>9</sup> Maurice Agulhon, *Le Cercle dans la France bourgeoisie, 1810-1848: étude d'une mutation de sociabilité* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1977): especially 11-14.

In such works as *L'Art de la conversation* and *Quand l'Europe parlait français*, Fumaroli took up the subject as a national source of pride, and promoted the idea of the Enlightenment *salon* as a national treasure, an icon of French superiority, and as central evidence of the civilised nature of his country. As one of the stewards of France's illustrious past, from his post at *l'Académie Française*, Fumaroli published elaborate treatises on the link between the eighteenth-century *salon* and intellectual production. He described the close linkage between his eighteenth-century predecessors – celebrated thinkers such as Voltaire and Rousseau – and contemporary academics. In his view, from the birth of the *salon* in the *ancien régime* to the exceptional literary output in the twentieth century, France has stood at the forefront of the world's intellectual life; indeed, French philosophy and literature have continued to soar to ever great heights.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Marc Fumaroli, *Chateaubriand: poésie et terreur* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 2003); *Actualité de la rhétorique: colloque de Paris* (Paris: Klincksieck, 2002); *The Poet and the King: Jean de la Fontaine and his Century*, translated by Jane Marie Todd (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002); *Quand l'Europe parlait français* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 2001); *Identité littéraire de l'Europe* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000); *Chateaubriand et les arts* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1999); *L'Art de la conversation: anthologie* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 1997); *L'Etat culturel: une religion moderne* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1991); *Age de l'éloquence* (Geneva: Droz, 1980). Several others French scholars of literature have focused on the *salon*, including Christophe Martin, *Espaces du féminin dans le roman français du XVIIIe siècle* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2004); Marie-France Silver and Marie-Laure Girou Swiderski, *Femmes en toutes lettres les*



Even the historian Michel Vovelle, a contributor to French Revolutionary historiography from the political left, expressed a similar reverence for this tradition of intellectual history. Vovelle focused on the *salon* as an important institution of academic lineage; a training ground where Diderot, d'Alembert, and other rising stars came of age and developed their ideas into a coherent philosophy.<sup>11</sup> Prominent historian Roland Mousnier wrote that the eighteenth-century *salon* became the domain of reform-minded philosophers; he cited it as a unique gathering place of all estates, ranks, and fortunes where wit and *savoir-vivre* took precedence over any status bestowed by birth.<sup>12</sup> Literature specialist Roger Chartier focused on the purposefulness of conversation and elaborated on the concrete *salon* practices that formed an

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*épistolaires du XVIIIe siècle* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000); Elena Russo, *La Cour et la ville de la littérature classique aux Lumières: l'invention de soi* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002); Elena Russo, editor, *Exploring the Conversible World: Text and Sociability From the Classical Age to the Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Michel Vovelle, *La Révolution Française: idéaux, singularités, influences: journées d'études en hommage à Albert Soboul, Jacques Godechot et Jean-René Suratteau: actes* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 2002); *Les Républiques-soeurs sous le regard de la grande nation 1795-1803: de l'Italie aux portes de l'empire Ottoman, l'impact du modèle républicain français* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000); *L'Homme des Lumières* (Paris: Seuil, 1996); *The Revolution Against the Church: From Reason to Supreme Being* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1991).

<sup>12</sup> Roland Mousnier, *The Institutions of France Under the Absolute Monarchy, 1598-1789* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

intellectual association regardless of social background. Chartier also demonstrated an interest in analysing the role of the *salon* in private lives, thus broadening the analysis of the institution's significance beyond its role as a public utility against state power.<sup>13</sup> Pierre Chaunu and Hervé Dré villon described an all-encompassing *vie de salon* as a unique French system for the refinement of its civilisation: each added their own narratives detailing the accomplishments of the *salon*'s leading participants and the importance of remembering and analysing this institution.<sup>14</sup> They presented a story of the Enlightenment *salon* as triumphant and heroic, representing the abstract ideals of the era: liberty, equality, and rationality. The *salon*, they argued, was at

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<sup>13</sup> Roger Chartier, *On the Edge of the Cliff: History, Language, and Practices*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); *Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991): especially 154-161. For further analysis of eighteenth-century private lives, see Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, editors, *Histoire de la vie privée* (Paris: Seuil, 1985), especially an often-cited article by Jacques Revel entitled 'Les Usages de la civilité,' 169-209. The roots of *la vie privée* may be traced back to an eighteenth-century fascination; for example, see P.J.B. Le Grand d'Aussy, *Histoire de la vie privée des français depuis l'origine de la nation jusqu'à nos jours*, 2 volumes (Paris: Collections Sens de L'Histoire, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Chaunu, *La Civilisation de l'Europe des Lumières* (Paris: Arthaud, 1971); Hervé Dré villon, *Histoire culturelle de la France* (Paris: A. Colin, 2002); *Introduction à l'histoire culturelle de la France de l'Ancien Régime XV-XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: SEDES, 1997). For a more recent elaboration of this ideal, see Benedetta Craveri, *The Age of Conversation*; translated from *Civilita Della Conversazione* by Teresa Waugh (New York: New York Review Books, 2005).



the centre of the birth of their modern era and integrated the institution into France's overall political and cultural achievements.<sup>15</sup>

The story of the Enlightenment *salon* has also attracted several US scholars; indeed it has become part of their general romance and preoccupation with the beautiful life of eighteenth-century Paris, a view that appears to have clouded their judgment of the era. Gregory S. Brown has called the '*beau XVIII siècle*,' the leading time and place for cultural and intellectual achievement. Carla Hesse has referred to the era as 'our happy eighteenth' for scholars of France; and Lynn Hunt has named it 'a golden age.'<sup>16</sup> The *salon* has found the greatest currency in the discipline of

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<sup>15</sup> For further examples, see Jean Chagniot, *Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1988); Jean-Pierre Chaline, *Sociabilité et érudition: les sociétés savantes en France, XIXe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Editions du CTHS, 1998); Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *Gens de finances au XVIIIe siècle* (Brussels: Complexe, 1993); *Histoire des élites du XVIe au XXe siècle* (Paris: Tallandier, 1991); *La Vie quotidienne de la noblesse Française aux XVI et XVII siècles* (Paris: Hachette, 1979); *La Noblesse au XVIIIe siècle, de la féodalité aux Lumières* (Paris: Hachette, 1976); Pierre Nora, editor, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984-1986), translated as *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* by Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-1998); Georges Mongrédien, *La Vie de société aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Hachette, 1950).

<sup>16</sup> Gregory S. Brown, 'French Cultural History in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century' syllabus, History 728, University of Nevada at Las Vegas; Carla Alison Hesse, 'Roche on the Move', *French Historical Studies* 27:4 (Autumn 2004): 741-745; Lynn Hunt, 'When All Roads Led to Paris', *LA Times*, December 22, 2002: Section R:3.



history, but it has also attracted considerable attention from scholars working in the field of art history and literature who have found the institution to be the leading meeting place of the great artists and writers of that period.<sup>17</sup>

Within the field of history, the *salon* has also particularly drawn historians of France who have focused on the category of sociability.<sup>18</sup> For example, Daniel Gordon's monograph devoted

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<sup>17</sup> For examples, see Elizabeth Heckendorn Cook, *Epistolary Bodies: Gender and Genre in the Eighteenth-Century Republic of Letters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); Nancy K. Miller, *French Dressing: Women, Men, and Ancien Régime Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1995); Joan DeJean and Nancy K. Miller, *Displacements: Women, Tradition, Literatures in French* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991); Peter Brooks, *The Novel of Worldliness: Crébillon, Marivaux, Laclos, Stendhal* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). For its usage by historians of eighteenth-century French art, see Claudia Denk, *Artiste, citoyen & philosophe: der Künstler und sein Bildnis im Zeitalter der französischen Aufklärung* (München: Fink, 1998); Mary D. Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Robert J. Young, *Marketing Marianne: French Propaganda in America, 1900-1940* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 2004). Young presents French political leaders as seeking to establish a strong presence in the U.S. by promoting its cultural capital, including U.S. admiration for its *salons*, literature, painting, music, architecture, interior design, fashion, and cuisine, particularly prevalent among northeastern cities.

<sup>18</sup> The concept has also been broadly applied in European and several single-nation histories, including Yves Beaurepaire, *L'Europe des francs-maçons: XVIIIe-XXIe siècles* (Paris: Belin, 2002); Iain

to the idea of sociability gave prominence to the *salon* as a place of egalitarian exchange and rational progress. He cited the *salon* as the dominant social form of the eighteenth century, and described how French elites claimed civility, conviviality, and sociability as representative of their country's superior civilisation.

Paraphrasing contemporary social commentators, Gordon noted that conversation was perceived as 'a delicate pleasure,' which could only exist in the most civilised society. Further elaborating on the transformation of sociability, Gordon suggested that seemingly apolitical behaviours, such as personal manners and small-group interactions, came to be perceived as representing the country as a whole, evolving into powerful tools for a much-expanded segment of society. This high-minded sociability was no longer viewed as the special achievement of a small group, but became the basis for the country's claims to its civilisation.<sup>19</sup>

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McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries, and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Etienne Françoise, editor, *Sociabilité et société bourgeoise en France, en Allemagne et en Suisse, 1750-1850* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1986).

<sup>19</sup> For a broad discussion of these claims in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France and how the concept of sociability has been used over the last twenty years, see Thomas Brennan, *Public Drinking and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988); Gregory S. Brown, *A Field of Honor: Writers, Court Culture, and Public Theater in French Literary Life from Racine to the Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993); David Garrioch, *The Making of Revolutionary Paris* (Berkeley: University of

Conversation became highly relevant as a general philosophical ideal, penetrating the domains of ethical, historical, and political reflection. Gordon argued that the *salon* itself was a democratising influence, one that became the basis of a special egalitarian social system.<sup>20</sup>

### **From passive hosts to purposeful directors**

For all of the discussion of the importance of the Enlightenment *salon*, a predominant nineteenth- and early twentieth-century viewpoint persisted among scholars in the 1970s and 1980s: the *salon* organisers have been deemed frivolous. The

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California Press, 2002); Carol E. Harrison, *The Bourgeois Citizen in Nineteenth-Century France: Gender, Sociability, and the Uses of Emulation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Robert H. Isherwood, *Farce and Fantasy: Popular Entertainment in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Gary Kates, *The Cercle Social, the Girondins, and the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Michèle Root-Bernstein, *Boulevard Theatre and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Research Press, 1984).

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Gordon, *Citizens Without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Daniel Gordon, editor, *Postmodernism and the Enlightenment: New Perspectives in Eighteenth-Century French Intellectual History* (New York: Routledge, 2001). For other examples of the idealisation of French sociability and conversation, see H.L. Wesseling, *Certain Ideas of France: Essays on French History and Civilisation* (Westport: Greenwood, 2002); Theodore Zeldin, *Conversation* (London: Harvill Press, 1998); Eugen Weber, *My France: Politics, Culture, Myth* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991).



work of Alan Kors and Daniel Roche, for example, was typical in its treatment of the institution's leadership, barely recognising and sometimes dismissing the very women who invented, governed, and sustained it. Rarely were these individuals analysed or discussed in any depth; in most instances, they were not even mentioned by name. This gender bias permeated much of the historical writing at that time, and became particularly apparent in the specific story of the *salon*. Even when an increasing number of books began to attribute greater historical significance to the *salon*, their descriptions of the *salon* leadership often remained unchanged. These individuals were generally minimised or recast as supporting actors. In a few cases, the *salon* leaders were mentioned by name – such as Vichy du Deffand or Lespinasse – but they were then criticised for their lack of interest in the philosophical ideas said to have developed in their own *salons*. Chartier, for example, characterised them as bickering women, obsessed by betrayals and rivalries between social sets that were 'dominated' by a single woman. He argued that they fought for social superiority and cared little for innovation or political reform.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See Chartier, 1991, Chapter 2; Alan Charles Kors, editor, *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Daniel Roche, *Les Républicains des lettres: gens de culture et Lumières au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1988); Alan Charles Kors and Paul Korshin, editors, *Anticipations of the Enlightenment in England, France, and Germany* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); Alan Charles Kors, *D'Holbach's Coterie: An Enlightenment in*

In Keith Baker's celebrated biography of Condorcet, a foundational text in the history of science, the *salon* made a prominent appearance as a formative institution in Condorcet's early successes; he credited it as the place where he and other young intellectuals established important relationships that led to the development of their innovative theories. The *salon*, he wrote, was where these men learned the sophisticated ways of international leaders; the 'place in which they developed a reformist political strategy and upended the status quo.' Despite the importance accorded to the existence of the institution, however, Baker did not accord any similar import to the women who were said to have created the places.<sup>22</sup>

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*Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). In Alan Kors book on the social circle of the baron d'Holbach, he took great pains to distinguish between the male *coterie* of d'Holbach and the female-led *salons* of eighteenth-century Paris. Kors argued that d'Holbach's weekly meeting of his social circle played a critical role in the development of new philosophical thinking, more so than the *salons*, where no serious intellectual production took place. The term '*salonnier*' was not coined to categorise these men, but these men filled the role of host and their gatherings were all part of a shared Parisian circuit. Roche later revised some of his views after interventions by gender historians; see Daniel Roche, *France des Lumières*, translated as *France in the Enlightenment* by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998); Pierre Goubert and Daniel Roche, *Les Français et l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Keith Michael Baker, *Condorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1975): especially 14-18 and 23-27.

That is not to suggest that he downplayed the women's participation; rather he presented their contribution as an insignificant storyline – even as a beauty and etiquette contest. Baker described *salonnière* Julie de Lespinasse as a highly-attractive woman who had been 'acquired' by another *salonnière*, Marie Vichy du Deffand, for the purposes of 'decorating' her *salon*. He went on to detail how Lespinasse learned the craft of hostessing from this older woman, then betrayed her by entertaining the leading guests of her 'protectress' at a 'pre-salon' of her own while the old lady slept. He went on to describe how, after she was discovered, Lespinasse broke away to open and to run her own rival *salon*, which included some of the great intellectuals of her time, notably Condorcet and d'Alembert. He portrayed her as having 'orchestrated' the conversation of her *salon* guests and educating them on 'social graces' in a *salon* that met daily over the course of ten years.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Several books have conceived of the *encyclopédists* as a men's club at the centre of the Enlightenment, sometimes elaborating on particular subsets, such groupings as Diderot and Holbach; d'Alembert and Voltaire; and Quesnay, Baudeau, Le Trosne, and other physiocrats. Further examples are found in Carl L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1932); Jack R. Censer, editor, *The French Revolution and Intellectual History* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1989); Frank A. Kafker, *The Encyclopedists as a Group: A Collective Biography of the Authors of the Encyclopédie* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1996); *Notable Encyclopedias of the Late Eighteenth Century: Eleven Successors of the Encyclopédie* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1994); John Lough, *The Contributors to the Encyclopédie* (London: Grant & Cutler, 1973); *The*



Baker credited Lespinasse with little more than serving as a sort of mid-wife of the Enlightenment, worthy of mention but not much more. This incongruity is difficult to resolve – how could an institution stand at the centre of the eighteenth century, but its leaders be considered irrelevant? This representation, appearing at a time when the development of women's history was gathering momentum, stood out for its sexist historical description and provided a particularly compelling point of departure. It emerged as a category rich with possibilities and provided an effective means to demonstrate women's centrality in an important historical process; with the rise of women's history came the rise of the *salonnière* as an important historical entity.

Promoting a positive construction of *salon* women in the emerging public sphere, one where women and men came together to use their reason to launch their ideas, Dena Goodman described how *salons*, academies, and lodges, among others, defied dominant society by using the values of reciprocity and exchange.<sup>24</sup> Calling

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*Encyclopédie* (London: Longman, 1971); *Essays on the Encyclopédie of Diderot and d'Alembert* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968); Didier Masseau, *L'Invention de l'intellectuel dans l'Europe du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); 'Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime,' *History and Theory* 31:1 (February 1992): 1-20; 'Enlightenment *Salons*: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22:3

the *salonnière* the 'governor' in her role of 'structuring (the) reciprocal exchange,' she elaborated on how the *salon* came to be a powerful social base to sway public opinion and a vehicle of great social mobility. The institution was transformed by exceptional women, from 'a noble, leisure form of social gathering into a serious working space,' who attempted to sever the historical ties between the *salon* and royal court society. Goodman described how these women established centres of seriousness in a society characterised, then and now, as decadent and licentious.<sup>25</sup>

Goodman staked an even larger claim for the *salon*, asserting that the female-governed *salon* was at 'the centre of the

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(1989): 329-350; 'Filial Rebellion in the *Salon*: Madame Geoffrin and her Daughter,' *French Historical Studies* 16:1 (1989): 28-47.

<sup>25</sup> Several female scholars have challenged an overemphasis on elite sociability that they have perceived, in which some have specifically cited the *salon* institution. See Arlette Farge, *Vivre dans la rue à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992); Olwen H. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996); *Women and the Limits of Citizenship in the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). For a related critique of such rehabilitative efforts as maintaining class and racial biases, see Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2004). For an alternative approach to the study of gender in early modern France, see Barbara Diedendorf and Carla Hesse, editors, *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1993); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

Enlightenment project,' and that the seriousness of that project was matched and supported by the seriousness with which the *salonnières* approached their own *metier*.<sup>26</sup> Goodman called for the activities of these individuals to be recognised in inspiring these great works of the Enlightenment. By taking this position, she inverted a traditional view of gender and power and challenged historians to reconsider the gender assumptions built into their selections, following the pattern of giving the leading roles to men and relegating women to a supporting cast, a sideshow in which Marie Vichy du Deffand and Julie de Lespinasse could easily be interchanged. In so doing, Goodman called for the female leader, the *salonnière*, to be accorded the same the historical significance as the institution. She argued that these women be reclassified as purposeful directors (rather than as passive hosts, or worse, frivolous socialites), noting that while these individuals had operated outside the official corridors of power, they had

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<sup>26</sup> Goodman's repositioning of the *salon* challenged traditional views of women's roles in the Enlightenment presented in such works as Ira Owen Wade, *The Structure and Form of the French Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968 and 1990); Alfred Bert Carter Cobban, editor, *The Eighteenth Century: Europe in the Age of Enlightenment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969); *In Search of Humanity: The Role of the Enlightenment in Modern History* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960).



nevertheless demonstrated considerable leadership and thus should be recognised for their governance in French society.<sup>27</sup>

Studying the *salon* in the same years as Goodman, Joan Landes also considered the institution within the framework of the public sphere, using the lens of gender studies. Landes argued that scholars significantly underestimated the role of gender in their *salon* analyses. In doing so, they misunderstood the much broader historical process by which modern political systems had emerged and bourgeois public lives had been constructed in France and beyond. Going further than most scholars, she described gender as 'the key axis of exclusion' in the emerging republican value

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<sup>27</sup> Reclassifications of women's authority and power have played a key role in several works of gender history, including Tjitske Akkerman, *Women's Vices, Public Benefits: Women and Commerce in the French Enlightenment* (Amsterdam: Spinhuis, 1992); Harriet B. Applewhite and Darlene G. Levy, editors, *Women and Politics in the Age of the Democratic Revolution* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990); Harriet B. Applewhite, Darlene G. Levy, and Mary Durham Johnson, editors, *Women in Revolutionary Paris 1789-1795* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979); Elisabeth Badinter, *Emilie, Emilie: l'ambition feminine au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983); Mita Choudhury, *Convents and Nuns in Eighteenth Century French Politics and Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Clare Haru Crowston, *Fabricating Women: The Seamstresses of Old Regime France, 1675-1791* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001); Sarah Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine, editors, *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Samia I. Spencer, *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Chantal Thomas, *Souffrir* (Paris: Payot, 2004); *The Wicked Queen: The Origins of the Myth of Marie-Antoinette* (New York: Zone Books, 1999).

system, one in which the aristocratic society was stigmatised as artificial and effeminate, and the republican ethos was praised as rational and manly. In Landes' view, the new political philosophies were constructed in deliberate opposition to *salon* culture, with masculinist styles of speech and behaviour adopted to provide distance from feminine social practices. Landes wrote that late eighteenth-century bourgeois leaders sought to exclude women from all aspects of political life and to defeat the elite, female-governed sociabilities of the eighteenth century associated with *ancien régime* life; in practice, then, the so-called Enlightenment brought fewer opportunities for educated women. In Landes' argument, this formal exclusion in a post-*salon* era ultimately brought about a society divided into two unequal and segregated spheres: women were relegated to a private, domestic domain while men dominated the public, political arena.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Joan B. Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Joan B. Landes, editor, *Feminism: The Public and the Private* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). In Landes' most recent work, she has explored the relationship between gender and Enlightenment within the history of science, an approach also taken by Jessica Riskin, *Science in the Age of Sensibility: The Sentimental Empiricists of the French Enlightenment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Anne C. Vila, *Enlightenment and Pathology: Sensibility in the Literature and Medicine of Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). For an alternative conception of the eighteenth-century Counter-Enlightenment, see Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the*

The arguments of Goodman and Landes found considerable support among female historians, and succeeded in shifting attention from the male participants to the female organisers.<sup>29</sup> Biographical summaries of *salonnières* demonstrated their achievements; these accomplished women came to serve as historical role models for female intellectuals, much the same way that stories of the *philosophes*, as 'great men', served as an historical ideal (and field of study) for male scholars. Even education came to be seen in a new light – the *salon* was seen as a

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*Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> Further elaboration of the public sphere and the *salon* institution may be found in a wide range of books, including those focused on France such as Lenard R. Berlanstein, *Daughters of Eve: A Cultural History of French Theater Women from the Old Regime to the Fin-de-Siècle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001); James McMillan, *France and Women, 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000); Bonnie G. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: The Bourgeoisie of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). For its placement in European and global gender histories, see Bonnie S. Anderson, *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1989); Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, editors, *A History of Women in the West, Volume 3, Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993); Karen M. Offen, *European Feminisms, 1700-1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Sylvia Paletschek and Bianka Pietrow-Ennker, *Women's Emancipation Movements in the Nineteenth Century: A European Perspective* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Bonnie G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).



substitute for the formal education that had been denied to women in the eighteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

Not all scholars welcomed the reinterpretation of the Enlightenment *salon* as the female-led site of democratic politics and power in European history. Indeed, many challenged key aspects of this revised *salon*, particularly with regard to its gender orientation, periodisation, and social composition.<sup>31</sup> Orest Ranum challenged the view that *salon* women were essential to the development of republican ideas, writing that 'Voltaire dipped his pen in satiric ink all along and never showed signs of acceding to

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<sup>30</sup> Several biographers have also been inspired by Goodman and Landes' subject and approach, including Jean Diwo, *Demoiselles des Lumières* (Paris: Fayard, 2004); Inès Murat, *Madame du Deffand 1696 – 1780: La lettre et l'esprit* (Paris: Perrin, 2003); Benedetta Craveri, *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, translated by Teresa Waugh (Boston: D.R. Godine, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> For examples of the continuation of the conventional definitions of Enlightenment institutions, see William Doyle and Alan Forrest, *Enlightenment and Revolution: Essays in Honour of Norman Hampson* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Louis Dupré, *The Enlightenment and the Intellectual Foundations of Modern Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Martin Fitzpatrick, editor, *The Enlightenment World* (London: Routledge, 2004); Harold Mah, *Enlightenment Phantasies: Cultural Identity in France and Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Robert L. Dietle and Mark S. Micale, editors, *Enlightenment, Passion, Modernity: Historical Essays in European Thought and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Peter Grell and Roy Porter, editors, *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

the polite sensibilities of the *salon*.<sup>32</sup> Michael Sonenscher went even further, denying a positive relationship between the eighteenth-century *salon* and the republicanism of the revolutionaries, writing that 'Robespierre and Saint-Just didn't have much time for niceties of the *salon*.' Instead, Sonenscher conceived of the revolutionary upheavals of the 1790s as a hostile response to the gendered hierarchies of these polished societies.<sup>33</sup> J.M.H. Forster argued that the *philosophes* broke away from the female-dominated *salons* in the 1760s, forming new circles at the homes of men, including Claude Dupin, Alexandre de La Poupelinière, and Paul Henri Dietrich, thus eliminating any political importance that the *salon* might have claimed. In Forster's opinion, 'the *salonnière* (has been given) her due – and then some.'<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Orest Ranum, 'Review of *Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the Enlightenment*' *American Historical Review* 103:1 (February 1998): 193-194; *Paris in the Age of Absolutism* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1968 and Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).

<sup>33</sup> Michael Sonenscher, 'Enlightenment and Revolution,' *Journal of Modern History* 70:2 (June 1998): 371-384.

<sup>34</sup> Others, more sympathetic to arguments from gender historians, expressed concern that these scholars had unwittingly confirmed the historical roles that they had sought to refute. Dale Van Kley asked if these revisions helped only to reaffirm the role of women as intermediaries and supporters of men in power. He argued that while historians may have established the *salonnière* as the organiser of the institution, they provided no evidence to contradict earlier claims that participants were male, and that the meetings were organised around the ideas of the men. Therefore, in his view, the revisions did not elevate the *salonnière*, but rather demonstrated conclusively the centrality of these

Carla Hesse wondered if tying these gender categories to the theories of the public sphere created unresolved problems. Hesse questioned the characterisation of the emerging public sphere as masculinist, in contrast to the feminist sensibilities of the *salon*, challenging the substitution of 'public and private' for 'political and domestic' and arguing that these terms could not be aligned without losing their distinctive meanings. Criticising the placement of women in this dichotomy of public and private, Hesse pursued an empirical study of the public role played by female writers during the 1790s. Using a statistical analysis of publications, she demonstrated that the commercialisation of cultural activity had not closed doors for women, but had rather increased their economic opportunities. In Hesse's view, women were more involved and more rewarded in the era of republicanism than they ever were in the earlier period of *salon* dominance.<sup>35</sup>

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male thinkers to the Enlightenment project. Van Kley even raised the possibility that the elite *salonnière* had not been knowledgeable of the affairs in her own home. To the extent that the discussion was described as anti-aristocratic in nature, one might then wonder if the *salonnières* had become traitors to their class or whether they had unknowingly supported the revolutionary activity that ultimately led to their demise. See Dale K. Van Kley, 'Review of *Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the Enlightenment*,' *French Historical Studies* 19:1 (Spring 1995): 215-226.

<sup>35</sup> Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). Additional criticisms of these gender studies have come in the form of challenges to the characterisation of the *salon* as a proto-democratic site. Robert Darnton has described the *salon* as an institution marked by formality



Like Ranum and Sonenscher, the musicologist-historian Jolanta Pekacz concurred with the early twentieth-century view of the *salon* as essentially conservative in political orientation, characterising it as an institution of pre-Revolutionary society. In her *salon* study, Pekacz stated that her intention was to emphasise how eighteenth-century *salons* and elite sociability were firmly rooted in the past – notably the seventeenth century – and did not 'break' from past traditions as other historians had claimed. In her view, the eighteenth-century *salon* was not a 'feminocentric' institution in which women were able to realize fully their

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and exclusivity. He placed the *salon* at the centre of aristocratic society, not at the heart of the Enlightenment project. In his accounts, the *salon* is depicted as a site of complacency, one that did not embrace the critical spirit of the Enlightenment, but rather provided deferential glorifications of authority and privilege. While he allowed that some reform-minded scribes had felt compelled to enter the *salon* of a first lady, they did so only to market their wares and to advance their careers, not to conceive of their revolutionary agendas. In Darnton's view, significant hazards awaited those who stayed too long in the *salon*, as this sort of elite sociability had the power to corrupt and to weaken writers' ideas and independence; those who stayed too long became a prop to the social order, domesticated by *le monde*. It was far better to decamp to the *café*, a true proto-democratic site of the eighteenth century – and the antithesis of the *salon*. Here, writers found a site that was open to all, an informal home of free-floating intellectuals who lampooned the foibles of the rich and powerful. This characterisation of the *salon* has appeared in several books and articles by Robert Darnton, including *George Washington's False Teeth: An Unconventional Guide to the Eighteenth Century* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003): especially 5-9, 27-31, 51-56, 124-126; *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); especially 3-7.

intellectual and social aspirations'.<sup>36</sup> Rather, the *salon* was a continuation of the social conduct of *honnêteté*.

To make her case, Pekacz divided her study into three parts: 1) presenting the ideal of *honnêteté*; 2) citing examples of eighteenth-century writers who appeared to subscribe to this ideal and how this had a formative effect on their lives; and 3) offering a case study of disagreements over French and Italian operas in which Pekacz studied disagreements that she linked to gender differences. While Pekacz did not provide sufficient contemporary evidence to support these revisions, she did offer an impressive discussion of music and opera in eighteenth-century Paris, thereby calling on historians to take greater account of musical interests and tastes in their studies of French sociability.<sup>37</sup>

Similar to Pekacz, Antoine Lilti approached the subject from a cultural perspective. In his case, he was interested in *la vie sociale*: specifically, the formal rituals and patronage of eighteenth-century Parisians, as well as the more general daily practices of aristocratic *divertissements* (amusements, entertainments, and recreations). As a launching point for this

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<sup>36</sup> See Jolanta T. Pekacz, *Conservative Tradition in Pre-Revolutionary France: Parisian Salon Women* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999): 10.

<sup>37</sup> See Jolanta T. Pekacz, *Conservative Tradition in Pre-Revolutionary France: Parisian Salon Women* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999): especially 8-14; 'The *Salonnières* and the Philosophes' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 2 (1999): 277-297. Pekacz has announced that will be starting a project on the *salon* as a nineteenth-century *lieux de mémoire* in which she seeks to revise her earlier representation of early modern *salons*.

project, he argued against the interpretation of the Enlightenment *salon* as defined by Habermas and others. He rejected the late twentieth-century idea that the *salon* formed any part of an emerging public sphere or served as a place for critical discussion and popular diffusement of Enlightenment ideas – nor did he accept the characterisation of the *salon* as a site of female governance in French society, thus challenging the significance accorded to Marie Vichy du Deffand and Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin by some historians. In short, he diverged from the recent historiography of Enlightenment *salons* that characterised the institution as politically subversive.

Instead, Lilti proposed a study of *la sociabilité mondaine*. More explicitly, Lilti declared that his interests did not lie with *salons*, but rather with making a contribution to *l'histoire de la mondanité*, thus expanding upon a subject previously taken up by Philippe Ariès, Roger Chartier, Etienne Françoise, and others.<sup>38</sup> By studying such questions as how the Parisian nobility preserved its social preeminence, interacted with the public sphere, developed political and literary reputations, and coped with monarchical power, Lilti believed that he could analyse cultural and social distinctions among the aristocracy. In short, with this alternative

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<sup>38</sup> Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, editors, *Histoire de la vie privée* (Paris: Seuil, 1985); Roger Chartier, *Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, translated by Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); Etienne Françoise, editor, *Sociabilité et société bourgeoise en France, en Allemagne et en Suisse, 1750-1850* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1986).



framework, Lilti could delve deeper into socio-political mechanisms among eighteenth-century elites, a study that he called a 'sociology of *la bonne société*'.<sup>39</sup>

Some scholars studying the seventeenth have also been eager to expand the *salon* story and share the Pekacz-Lilti timeframe of the *salon* as an early modern institution. In *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime*, Erica Harth questioned the periodisation of the *salon* institution and the characterisation of its antecedents. She challenged the view that the eighteenth century had been the era in which the *salon* flourished and that the seventeenth-century was a period that was simply overrun with frivolous leisure institutions. Arguing that there was no supporting evidence to warrant this strict separation between the two centuries, she asserted that the eighteenth-century historiography had not acknowledged much continuation in the *salon* tradition, nor recognised the extent to which the *salon* had

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<sup>39</sup> See Antoine Lilti, *Le monde des salons: sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIII siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2005): especially 10-12 for a statement of his research purpose. See also 'Vertus de la conversation: l'abbé Morellet et la sociabilité mondaine', *Littératures Classiques* 37 (1999): 213-228, a subject taken up by Jeffrey Merrick, 'Society Needs Women 'Like Coffee Needs Sugar': André Morellet on the Female Sex,' in *André Morellet (1727-1819) in the Republic of Letters and the French Revolution*, edited by Jeffrey Merrick and Dorothy Medlin (New York: Peter Lang, 1995): 95-114, and Daniel Gordon 'Public Opinion and the Civilizing Process in France: The Example of Morellet,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22:3 (Spring 1989): 302-328.

remained part of court culture in both manners and philosophical leanings. Harth questioned the accolades bestowed on eighteenth-century *salonnières*, who were often credited with remaking aristocratic social practices into serious *bureaux*, and the dismissals of the '*précieuses*' as simply women who ran schools of civility. She demanded greater consideration of seventeenth-century women and called on scholars to reconsider the earlier *salons*, such as that of mademoiselle de Scudéry, as historically important.<sup>40</sup>

Several scholars of seventeenth-century France set out to elaborate on this expanded chronology of the *salon*. Barbara Krajewska, in *Du Coeur a l'esprit: Mlle de Scudéry et ses samedis*, provided an in-depth biography of mademoiselle de Scudéry, a woman she described as a seventeenth-century *salonnière*, and argued that her *salon* standards served as the model later emulated by Enlightenment women.<sup>41</sup> Carolyn Lougee, in *Paradis des femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France*, presented a statistical study of the role of the seventeenth-century *salon* in social competition, as well as in setting standards of civility and disseminating good manners.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), especially the introduction.

<sup>41</sup> Barbara Krajewska, *Du Coeur à l'esprit: mademoiselle de Scudéry et ses samedis* (Paris: Kimé, 1993).

<sup>42</sup> Carolyn C. Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes: Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton:

Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, in *Exclusive Conversations: The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France*, focused on epistolary exchange and the importance of conversation for social survival.<sup>43</sup> Joan E. DeJean, in *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France*, emphasised the close relationship between the *salon* and women's production of literature in the seventeenth century.<sup>44</sup> John J. Conley, in *The Suspicion of Virtue: Women Philosophers in Neoclassical France*, presented case studies of five women – Sablé, Deshoulières, Sablière, La Vallière, and Maintenon – and analysed their relationship to the seventeenth-century *salon*, describing women who opened and hosted the *mondaine* affairs as well as those who critiqued and forsook the *salon* for the religious solitude of cloisters.<sup>45</sup> Even Orest Ranum,

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Princeton University Press, 1976). For a related work, see Linda Timmermans, *L'Accès des femmes à la culture 1598-1715* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 1993).

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, *Exclusive Conversations: The Art of Interaction in Seventeenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988). For related work, see Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, *Publishing Women's Life Stories in France, 1647-1720: From Voice to Print* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Elizabeth C. Goldsmith and Dena Goodman, editors, *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Anne Goldgar, *Impolite Learning: Conduct and Community in the Republic of Letters, 1680-1750* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

<sup>44</sup> Joan E. DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

<sup>45</sup> John J. Conley, *The Suspicion of Virtue: Women Philosophers in Neoclassical France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002).



who had dismissed the characterisation of the *salon* as politically insignificant, came to reconsider his position and value the seventeenth-century *salon*. In his revised edition of *Paris in the Age of Absolutism: An Essay*, he presented a single new chapter, 'The First Women Writers', in which he reconsidered the role of women in seventeenth-century Paris, asserting that several aristocratic women had established a *salon* institution that had promoted a new literary public.<sup>46</sup>

At the other end of the timeline, nineteenth-century scholars also called for an extension of the *salon* story; they dismissed the idea that the *salon* institution ended with the start of the French Revolution. Most notably, historian Steven Kale questioned the common dividing line of the 1789 Revolution, suggesting that it led to a skewed view of the *salon*, one that did not take into account the continuation of aristocratic sociability in the nineteenth century. Kale argued that the exclusive focus on the eighteenth century created blinders that led to the incorrect assumption that the *salon* had been exceptional to the pre-Revolutionary era. Kale believed that *salons* were alive and well in the first half of the nineteenth century, centrally present in the life of French notables. In his view, the *salon* united members of high society of that era and served as a venue for aristocratic politics and the exchange of political ideas. Kale has described

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<sup>46</sup> See 'The First Women Writers' in Orest Ranum, *Paris in the Age of Absolutism*, revised edition (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

this as the 'persistence of the *salon*' in helping to perpetuate a small and homogeneous elite, one that maintained power in the hands of the few. In Kale's opinion, the *salon* was particularly strong between 1815 and 1848 and only started to weaken in the mid nineteenth century when an increased number of competitors took over its political role. Specifically, he cited the rise of political parties, mass media, legislative bodies, and liberalism as the key factors. Kale also believed that a widening electoral franchise and a growing separation between work and leisure played a role. In his political history of the French *salon*, Kale makes a strong case for the *salon* as a nineteenth-century socio-political institution.<sup>47</sup>

### **The popularity of this social ideal**

This expanded *salon* definition has come to be widely accepted by most contemporary scholars of France. The *salon* story, particularly the revised version presented in the 1980s and 1990s, has been adopted and subsequently disseminated well beyond the domain of the scholarly monograph. Antoine de

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<sup>47</sup> Steven D. Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004): especially 2-16; *Legitimism and the Reconstruction of French Society, 1852-1883* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1992); 'Women, the Public Sphere, and the Persistence of Salons,' *French Historical Studies* 25:1 (2002): 115-148. For a related discussion of the nineteenth-century *salon* as a French socio-political institution, see Anne Martin-Fugier, *La Vie élégante, ou la formation de Tout-Paris* (Paris: Fayard, 1990): especially 91-124.

Baecque and Françoise Mélonio open their *Histoire culturelle de la France: lumières et liberté, les dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles* with descriptions of the *salon* as a site of democratic sociability. They claimed that the *salons* created bonds that undermined hierarchical or feudalist organisation of human relationships, and ultimately developed the ideas that brought about the French Revolution and the birth of the modern world.<sup>48</sup>

Colin Jones postulates that the eighteenth-century *salon* was an instrument of intellectual and political power. In his political history of eighteenth-century France and a book on the life of Madame de Pompadour, Jones characterises the *salon* as the place where individuals gathered to discuss, to debate, and to engage in polite social intercourse, thus giving weight to what otherwise might have been dismissed as frivolous gatherings. Much the same can be found in Jones' *The Great Nation: France From Louis XV to Napoleon*, an overview of the country's eighteenth-century history.<sup>49</sup>

In *The Challenge of the West: Peoples and Cultures from the Stone Age to the Global Age*, Lynn Hunt and her co-authors describe a typical *salon* scene from the Enlightenment,

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<sup>48</sup> Antoine de Baecque, *Histoire culturelle de la France: Lumières et liberté, les dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles* (Paris: Seuil, 1998): 51-55.

<sup>49</sup> Colin Jones, *Madame de Pompadour: Images of a Mistress* (London: National Gallery, 2002): 19-21; *The Great Nation: France From Louis XV to Napoleon, 1715-1799* (London: Allen Lane, 2002): especially 178-185, 210-214, 368-371.





characterising *salons* as the bases that galvanised reform movements by bringing together great artists and thinkers and providing forums for new ideas and intellectual contacts. Soon this institution of democratic sociability was providing a place for individuals to learn how to fight the oppressing pillars of the throne and altar, and ultimately how to bring about mass revolution. Other examples, co-authored by scholars of France, are prevalent, including Timothy Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660-1789*; Michel Delon in *Dictionnaire Européen des Lumières*; William Doyle in *Origins of the French Revolution*; Ulrich Im Hof in *The Enlightenment: An Historical Introduction*; Dorinda Outram in *The Enlightenment*; and Isser Woloch in *The Western Experience*. The descriptions rarely vary: most claim the *salon* was a champion of the Enlightenment, the era's base for democratic sociability, governed by exceptional women.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Lynn Hunt, *The Challenge of the West: Peoples and Cultures From the Stone Age to the Global Age* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1995): 646-649; Michel Delon, editor, *Dictionnaire Européen des Lumières* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001): 259-263, 928-932, 971-974; William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988): 84-84, 116-117, 126-127; Ulrich Im Hof, *The Enlightenment: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994): 113-117; Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment: New Approaches to European History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): xii-xiii, 91-93; Mortimer Chambers, Barbara Hanawalt, Theodore Rabb, Isser Woloch, and Raymond Grew, *The Western Experience* (New York: Knopf, 1995): 619-622. The *salon* also figures prominently in historical surveys that are not co-authored by modern French historians; see

The *salon* has become a highly recognised entity, a part of history that educated individuals are expected to know. It is this widespread recognition – the *salon* as identifiable brand – that Patrice Higonnet puts to use in his new book, *Paris: Capital of the World*, aimed at general-interest readers. As part of his analysis of the unique quality of this city, Higonnet repeats the classic narrative of the *salon* and describes it as the place where the 'new spirit of the age was really forged.'<sup>51</sup>

While Higonnet perceived of the *salon* as uniquely Parisian, John Merriman situates the institution throughout Europe. In *A History of Modern Europe*, Merriman concludes that the *salon* was so influential that it was exported from Paris, and he describes how notables from other towns set out to emulate the structure and form of this phenomenon in their own settings. Such French towns as Bordeaux and Nantes were particularly enraptured; groups in other European cities such as Berlin, London, Rome, and Vienna imitated this Parisian phenomenon in their own settings, seeing the value in the structure and form of *salons* as stimulants for elegant

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Donald Kagan, *The Western Heritage* (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003): 597-601; Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilisation* (Boston: Thomson, 2003): 474-476; Steven Hause and William Maltby, *Western Civilization: A History of European Society*, Volume 2 (New York: Wadsworth, 1999): 512 and 543-546; Mark Kishlansky, Patrick Geary, and Patricia O'Brien, *Civilization in the West* (New York: Longman, 1998): 636-637.

<sup>51</sup> Patrice Higonnet, *Paris: Capital of the World*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002): especially 30-37, 42-45.

and informed conversation. Farther east, Merriman describes how Polish elites gathered in Warsaw to establish their own *salons* to facilitate the transmission of Western ideas, and that a reformist spirit spread throughout the cosmopolitan centres of the Continent. Even the burgeoning American colonies were being swayed to take up the *salon* spirit, using it as a foundation to develop their nineteenth-century literature movement, as Mary Loeffelholz discussed in *From School to Salon: Reading Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry*.<sup>52</sup>

In conclusion, the Enlightenment *salon* has generally been defined as a regular gathering of individuals, organised and led by a woman that existed for the purposes of fostering intellectual exchange and interaction. As a central institution of eighteenth-century French society, and as an historic place of sociability where individuals came together for the development of an

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<sup>52</sup> See John M. Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996): 423-427; Mary Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon: Reading Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004): especially 162-191. Other scholars have emphasised German and Jewish origins to the *salon*, including Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003): especially 303-314; Deborah Hertz, *Jewish High Society in Old Regime Berlin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988): especially 23-47 and 75-118. The Jewish Museum in New York recently held an exhibition, curated by Emily Bilski, on the topic of Jewish *salonnières*. See Emily D. Bilski and Emily Braun, *Jewish Women and Their Salons: The Power of Conversation* (New York: The Jewish Museum and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005): especially 7-19 and 149-157.



exceptional political community, the *salon* has become central to (and synonymous with) narratives of Enlightenment, Revolution, and Modernity. It is this *salon* that has been situated at the centre of Enlightenment studies. A significant industry in its own right and a nearly universal framework for studying the eighteenth century, it continues to figure prominently in a wide range of theories, including emerging democracy, growing liberal thought, early feminism, and national superiority.<sup>53</sup> As such, it is this *salon* story that has captured and held the attention of the academic community and a wider audience of general-interest readers. This combination of scholarly production and mass market interest has firmly established the idea of the *salon* in our understanding of European civilisation and international history. However, this popular idea of the *salon* has led to a skewed historical interpretation of eighteenth-century practices.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> See Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment* (Basingstroke: Palgrave, 2001). For other European appropriations, see Deirdre Dawson and Pierre Morère, editors, *Scotland and France in the Enlightenment* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2004); Dmitrii Ivanovich Rostislavov, *Provincial Russia in the Age of Enlightenment: The Memoirs of a Priest's Son*, translated by Alexander Martin (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002); Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh and Berlin, 2001).

<sup>54</sup> Jack Richard Censer, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001): 14-21; Ronald Schechter, editor, *The French Revolution: The Essential Readings* (Malden: Blackwell, 2001): 3-4; Emmet

## Challenging the classic narrative of the Enlightenment salon

In today's historical overviews, the Enlightenment *salon* is presented as an exceptional story, one that offers an inspirational model of human achievement. The *salon* participants are praised for their willingness to challenge the inequalities and excesses of their era, as well as for their successes in remaking their political existence. They are portrayed as unique for having established proto-democratic gatherings in the hostile environment of eighteenth-century Paris, and commended for having developed and fostered the criticism of monarchical governance that created the possibility for more open political systems. We are told that, even when these individuals were constrained by the existing social hierarchies, they continued to use the *salon* as a base from which to attack outmoded and destructive value systems.

Small in number – not more than a few hundred people have been linked to the *salons* – they had considerable impact. Their efforts have been credited with undermining *ancien régime* society, through actions that ultimately led to the revolutionising of the lives of twenty million French people – even

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Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994): 20-24.

more when European offshoot movements are included in the count. Perhaps most of all the *salon* story has stood out as a symbol of hope, even a guiding light, for generations of women. Here is a rare historical institution, one to which exceptional innovation and societal change has been attributed, where the powerful creators and leaders are women. Their leadership, now widely recognised and applauded, stands as a powerful reminder of the importance of women to the improvement of society. In the diversity of its social composition, the *salon* has provided conclusive evidence of the necessity of the full participation of every member of society.

### **Examining the usage of nineteenth- and twentieth-century document**

However, there is a problem with this shared faith in the existence of the Enlightenment *salon*, one that stems from methodology. The historians who have made such significant claims have, by and large, relied on Habermas' claims, nineteenth-century narratives, and occasionally eighteenth-century letters altered by nineteenth-century editors. Few have returned to the extant materials of the eighteenth century to substantiate their argument.

When Habermas positioned the Enlightenment *salon* in his theory of the public sphere, he did not provide sources



or evidence for his revisionist statements. Nor did he elaborate on the transformative claims that he made. Rather, Habermas devoted just a few pages to the *salon* institution in his now classic monograph, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Before and since venturing briefly onto French intellectual territory, Habermas offered a few disclaimers. Firstly, he considered the Enlightenment *salon* to have only secondary importance in his overall theory. His primary examples lay elsewhere, in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England and Germany, where he felt that the new public sphere had gathered momentum. Secondly, implying a reliance on secondary sources for his claims, he discussed his lack of familiarity with the French language and his limited experience (and interest) in French history.

Habermas also credited *salon* members with achieving only some of their reformist goals. He cited a number of factors that hindered their movement, most notably the closed and corrupt Parisian elite, too strong and unified for outsiders to bring about change. Even social commentators and political writers were too dependent on this upper stratum to openly speak out against injustice, he charged. Habermas further described a bourgeoisie too weak to establish the foundation necessary for the development of political journalism or parliamentary institutions, and a nobility too removed from economic activity to play a central role.

However, even though he offered disclaimers and acknowledged his lack of first-hand evidence, many historians of France took up these ideas as both the foundation and the departure point for their new projects. Even when they did so, they did not effectively reconcile the abstract frameworks posited by Habermas with specific historical practices and experiences of the eighteenth century; actual people and places were rarely accounted for within these broader studies. These philosophical generalisations of Habermas have created a number of negative consequences in these historical projects.

Specifically, historians who took his writings as a guide to eighteenth-century France did not sufficiently account for the distances between the ideal sphere of Habermas and the actual accounts of elite activities carried out in exclusive settings. They left aside the realities of the immense showplaces of Parisian high society, and ignored the formality, restrictions, and exclusivity described by contemporaries. By failing to account for this hierarchy that was central to the lives of eighteenth-century Parisian elites, they were simply imagining these eighteenth-century individuals as an intellectual community of equals in a public sphere, engaging in lively exchange and debate and formulating democratic ideals, rather than demonstrating their provocative claims.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> For examples of the influence of this public sphere theory on historians, see William Beik, T.C.W. Blanning, and James Van Horn

Surprisingly, even those who unsuccessfully searched for supporting evidence in eighteenth-century documents maintained a continuity with earlier claims. In *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*, Mary Vidal discussed the magical qualities and significance of the Enlightenment *salon* in pre-Revolutionary France. Vidal then wrote of the fruitlessness of her search to locate accounts of the *salon* in her archival and primary research. Discussing her disappointment in not being able to locate the extant documents, Vidal noted that 'we are obliged to

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Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); David A. Bell, 'The 'Public Sphere,' the State, and the World of Law in Eighteenth-Century France,' *French Historical Studies Forum: 'The Public Sphere in the Eighteenth Century'* 17:4 (Autumn 1992): 912-934; Dena Goodman, 'Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime', *History and Theory* 31:1 (February 1992): 1-20; Daniel Gordon, 'Philosophy, Sociology, and Gender in the Enlightenment Conception of Public Opinion,' *French Historical Studies Forum: 'The Public Sphere in the Eighteenth Century'* 17:4 (Autumn 1992): 882-911; Margaret C. Jacob, 'The Mental Landscape of the Public Sphere: A European Perspective,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28:1 (Autumn 1994): 95-113; Anthony J. La Vopa, 'Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe,' *Journal of Modern History* 64 (March 1992): 79-116; Benjamin Nathans, 'Habermas's 'Public Sphere' in the Era of the French Revolution,' *French Historical Studies* 16 (Spring 1990): 621-644.



rely mainly on fictional or semi-fictional representations of social life.<sup>56</sup>

Benedetta Craveri, in *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, presented a biography of this celebrated *salonnière*, describing a transformation of Vichy du Deffand from decadent courtesan to serious hostess. Craveri touched on some petty scandals, anecdotes, and intrigue, but emphasised more the contributions that her *salon* made to the ideals of liberty and reform, crediting her with fostering a unique intellectual and literary environment. Like Vidal, she recognised the lack of source materials to support some of the claims, but she too set aside this problem. While Vidal ended up relying on fictional eighteenth-century stories, Craveri used nineteenth-century memoirs and edited correspondence to make her claims about the *salon* that the contemporary documents did not support. She attributed the lack of materials to missing sources and the slow progression of the French language in establishing vocabulary for novel activities. However, both assertions are quite difficult to accept, given the abundant extant material from the period and the great precision of the vast majority of these documents. Equally difficult to accept is the alternative route taken; the nineteenth-century memoirs and correspondence of political partisans and

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<sup>56</sup> Mary Vidal, *Watteau's Painted Conversations: Art, Literature, and Talk in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992): 89-95.

Revolutionary survivors are so distorted that it is unwise to trust these documents as the sole evidentiary base.<sup>57</sup>

Dena Goodman made claims to finding some eighteenth-century sources to support the *salon* construct, but those sources were reconfigured in a manner that makes them difficult to accept. For example, in *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment*, Goodman frequently used the phrase 'in her salon' to describe the activities of Julie de Lespinasse, Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, and other women. In returning to the original documents, however, one finds that the words 'in her salon' were a substitution for other phrases, usually for 'chez elle' that has typically been translated as 'at her home.' Or in the case of 'chez Helvétius,' the translation was transformed to refer only to Anne-Catherine Helvétius, rather than referring to Anne-Catherine and Claude-Adrien Helvétius as their autobiographical (and friends') writings described. One also finds that descriptions of small dinner parties – *dîners and soupers* – were often used as the evidentiary base of the *salon* gatherings, without explanation for why such a switch occurred. In such discussions of *dîners* and *soupers*, a contemporary play mentioned over a dinner table, or a letter read aloud as entertainment or

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<sup>57</sup> Benedetta Craveri, *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, translated by Teresa Waugh (Boston: D.R. Godine, 1994).

possibly edification, were transformed into evidence of a literary *salon*.<sup>58</sup>

Daniel Gordon, in *Citizens without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1630-1789*, relied mostly on the early nineteenth-century writings of André Morellet and Jacques Delille. For his claims of the *salon* as a model of egalitarianism and democracy, Gordon cited post-Revolutionary books by Delille (*La Conversation*, 1812) and Morellet (*Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, 1812 and *Mémoires sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la Révolution; précédés de l'éloge de l'abbé Morellet*, published posthumously in 1821). Both publications employed the 1790s vocabulary of liberty and equality to make their claims, showing a distinctly retrospective view on pre-1789 Paris. In the case of Morellet, in particular, a great deal of his eighteenth-century correspondence is extant; therefore comparing his pre- and post-Revolutionary thoughts and ideas is a straightforward process. In his writings before the Revolution, he did not describe *salons*, proto-democratic societies, or egalitarian unions. Rather, he was an insecure young writer who desperately sought to make his way in a fiercely hierarchical

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<sup>58</sup> Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994): especially 101-103.



world where privileges were defended and relationships were essential to social advancement.<sup>59</sup>

In *Condorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics*, Keith Baker relied on even later sources for his claims, drawing on the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Baker described Condorcet as a member of the Lespinasse *salon*, a lively, brilliant, and harmonious institution. He wrote that while the 'muse of the Encyclopédie' was too poor to entertain lavishly, she still attracted founding '*salon* members' Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, François-Jean de Chastellux, Jean-François Marmontel, and Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot. Later members he listed were: abbé Arnaud, marquis Caraccioli, comte de Crillon, Denis Diderot, abbé Galiani, baron de Gleichen, baron de Grimm, président Hénault, David Hume, baron d'Holbach, André Morellet, abbé Raynal, and duc de la Rochefoucauld. To back up these assertions, he cited three sources: *Lettres de mademoiselle de Lespinasse* (1893); Pierre Ségur, *Julie de Lespinasse* (1905); and Janine Bouissounouse, *Julie de Lespinasse* (1958). The book of republished correspondence from Julie de Lespinasse undermines

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<sup>59</sup> Daniel Gordon, *Citizens Without Sovereignty: Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994): especially 28-32, 37-39, 64-68, 107-114, 189-194. For further discussion of the discrepancy in Morellet's writings between the pre- and post-Revolutionary eras, see Dorothy Medlin and Jeffrey Merrick, editors, *André Morellet (1727 - 1819) in the Republic of Letters and the French Revolution* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995): especially 5-26, and 115-184.

the claims that Baker made as only the book's preface described the *salon* of Lespinasse; the letters do not substantiate claims made about the *salon* of Lespinasse; the latter two are biographies written in a highly literary tradition.<sup>60</sup>

### Problems with overreliance on these published sources

A central methodological problem has been perpetuated in these projects. To rely on nineteenth-century sources (and sometimes even twentieth-century books) for these eighteenth-century lives is to accept those retrospective constructions of the Enlightenment *salon*. This overlooks the process by which some pre-Revolutionary practices were reimagined, reconfigured, and ultimately reified as the *salon*

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<sup>60</sup> Keith Michael Baker, *Condorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975): especially 16-18, 23-27. Baker referred to *Lettres de mademoiselle de Lespinasse* (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1893); Pierre-Marie-Maurice-Henri Ségur, marquis de, *Julie de Lespinasse* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1905); and Janine Bouissounouse, *Julie de Lespinasse* (Paris, 1958). For comparison, see Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et madame Suard, monsieur Suard et Garat: 1771-1791*, edited by Elisabeth Badinter (Paris: Fayard, 1988); *Correspondence complète avec le Président Hénault, Montesquieu, d'Alembert, Voltaire, Horace Walpole*, edited by M. de Lescure (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1865); Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot and Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, *Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et de Turgot, 1770-1779*, edited by Charles Henry (Paris: Charavay Frères, 1883).

institution. Certain women – most notably Marie Vichy du Deffand and Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, and to a lesser extent, Julie de Lespinasse – were only later named as the leaders of this *ancien régime* entity, central to that emerging mythology.

Survivors of the French Revolution, along with their descendents and friends, created a different legacy of their eighteenth-century lives. This *salon* emerges in their romanticised descriptions of a 'lost world' in retrospectively constructed texts and images as a distinct social entity. Its genesis comes from a combination of careful selection, ideal reconstruction, and blurred nostalgia. The stories ultimately coalesced as a legend about pre-Revolutionary Paris, one that gathered force over the course of several decades, and came to take on an aura of truth. This was not a spontaneous appearance; rather, hazy mentions were followed by brief descriptions, which were then picked up on in greater length until the idea flourished.

A large number of these survivor stories were published during the late years of the Napoleonic era and the Restoration period. They appeared in a mix of genres, including essays, journals, poems, letters, even pictures, each claiming to provide the 'truth' about the 1789 Revolution and the decades immediately preceding it. These publications presented a view of 'Old France' in which peace and prosperity prevailed, standing in sharp contrast to the wars and scarcity of the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary era. The stories showed the beneficence of



royalist forms of government and the gentleness of Bourbon sensibilities. Their legend of the *ancien régime* justified the exercise of power by those who had possessed it in the eighteenth century, and legitimised a certain view of France's past that directly challenged nineteenth-century leaders. In their sanitised chronicles, they called on French citizens to reconsider their acceptance of the Revolutionaries' vilification of pre-1789 governance and ideologies.<sup>61</sup>

In the early nineteenth century, numerous memoirs were published that portrayed the earlier era as an age of elegance and wit. They challenged anti-aristocratic rhetoric and contributed to 'restoring' society to its pre-1789 patterns. With a defensive tone and a self-justifying quality, they were written by

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<sup>61</sup> A few examples include Félicité de Genlis, *De l'esprit des étiquettes, 1812-1813*, edited by Edouard Quesnet (Rennes: H. Caillère, 1885); *Dictionnaire critique et raisonné des étiquettes de la cour, des usages du monde, des amusemens, des modes, des mœurs, des François, depuis la mort de Louis XIII jusqu'à nos jours*, 2 volumes (Paris: P. Mongie Aîné, 1818); *Mémoires de madame de Genlis*, preface by J. Lucas-Dubreton (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1928); *Mémoires de madame de Genlis – mémoires relatifs à l'histoire de France pendant le XVIIIe et le XIXe siècles*, foreword and notes by M. Baffière (Paris: Firmin-Didot Frères, 1857); *Mémoires inédits de madame la comtesse de Genlis, sur le XVIIIe siècle et la Révolution Française, depuis 1756 jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Ladvocat, 1825) *Mémoires inédits ... pour servir à l'histoire des dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles*, 8 volumes (Paris: Ladvocat, 1825). Germaine de Staël also contributed to the developing idealisation of 'salon society,' a role that was noticed in that era in Lydia Child's introduction in *The Biographies of Madame de Staël and Madame Roland* (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1832), especially 15-17.

individuals who strongly identified with their earlier *ancien régime* life and sought to counter the view that their lives had been corrupt or dissolute. These stories of ideal sociability, as they began to emerge in their writings, were gradually adopted by aristocratic society as a symbol of the glory of the earlier Bourbon régime.

In the same period that survivor stories were being published, collections of eighteenth-century letters also began to appear, but edited by individuals who were interested in presenting a rosy view of pre-Revolutionary individuals. Horace Walpole, a friend of Vichy du Deffand, had three volumes of her correspondence published at his own press in England (1810), but not before deciding which letters might be misconstrued and thus render Vichy du Deffand in a less than favourable light. He chose less than half of the letters to publish, nearly all of which had certain passages omitted in which Vichy du Deffand's colourful life was described.<sup>62</sup> In the French version published the next year, and published again in 1812, the editor Artaud de Montor admitted to perpetuating these suppressions, noting that 'it was necessary to

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<sup>62</sup> Marie Vichy du Deffand, la marquise du, *Letters of the Marquise du Deffand to the Hon. Horace Walpole, Afterwards Earl of Orford, from the year 1766 to the Year 1780* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1810). According to a meticulous index prepared by W.S. Lewis and his research staff at Yale University in the 1940s, only 348 letters of 838 were published, of which only 52 remained in their original form.



remove items that national taste and a just sense of suitability should condemn'.<sup>63</sup>

In a subsequent edition (1824), the publishers introduced the book by noting that they had made further cuts deemed 'necessary changes' for the times.<sup>64</sup> In a later edition of Vichy du Deffand's letters (1864), the editor introduced the volume by defending the decisions of Artaud de Montor. He wrote that it was necessary to cut words that would be harmful to honourable men. For example, in one letter, Vichy du Deffand referred to both writers Suard and Delille as *des polissons*, loosely translated as rascals. He even claimed that the decision was brought to Napoleon, writing that when Napoleon went to 'his miserable countryside of 1812, he ordered that we give him drafts of the works, except to remove what would be displeasing; he said that he got bored on the road and told (us that he) would read these volumes, and (then he) will write to Mayence with what will need to be done ... We received a letter from Mayence in which he wrote: those who want to get rid of the words *des polissons* are right;

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<sup>63</sup> See Montor's introduction of Marie Vichy du Deffand, *Lettres de la Marquise du Deffand à Horace Walpole, écrites dans les années 1766 à 1780 ... publiées d'après les originaux déposées à Strawberry Hill*, edited by M. Artaud de Montor, 4 volumes (Paris: Treuthel et Würtz, 1811 and 1812).

<sup>64</sup> See introduction of Marie Vichy du Deffand, *Lettres de la Marquise du Deffand à Horace Walpole, écrites dans les années 1766 à 1780 ... publiées d'après les originaux déposées à Strawberry Hill*, 4 volumes (Paris: Ponthieu, 1824).



those who want to get rid of more than that have no common sense, and by trying to please me, they will only have succeeded in displeasing me. The court must be left, more or less, the way it was'.<sup>65</sup> Such editing continued in later editions, and even as late as 1912, the majority of letters were published again in their altered condition.<sup>66</sup>

A similar process of editing is found in the nineteenth-century publication of Julie de Lespinasse's letters, *Lettres de mademoiselle de Lespinasse* (1811), in which the introductory remarks show that the idealisations were already beginning to form – in this case how society women had assembled groups that ultimately led to the improvement of France. It was an adulation that reached full flowering in a later republished edition of these letters, *Lettres de mademoiselle de Lespinasse, précédées d'une notice de Sainte-Beuve et suivies des autres écrits de l'auteur, et des principaux documents qui le concernent* (1893) when the preface described the *salon* of

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<sup>65</sup> See introduction to *Lettres de la marquise du Deffand à Horace Walpole, écrites dans les années 1766 à 1780*, edited by A. Thiers (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1864).

<sup>66</sup> Marie Vichy du Deffand, *Lettres à Horace Walpole – 1766-1780*, edited by Helen Wrigley Toynbee and Paget Jackson Toynbee, 3 volumes (Paris: Methuen et Cie, 1912). In the early twentieth century, these Walpole letters (then held by the Waldegrave family) were sold to W.S. Lewis, an independent researcher and Yale alumnus, who later donated the papers to Yale University. They have remained in their British manuscript collections, unexamined by historians of eighteenth-century France who wrote about Vichy du Deffand and the *salon* institution.

Lespinasse – even though the accompanying letters undermined these claims. In his introduction, Sainte-Beuve claimed that the *ancien régime* was filled with 'Happy days! when all life turned to sociability; when all was arranged for the gentlest commerce of minds and for the best conversation. Not a vacant day, not a vacant hour!' He credited Lespinasse with being a leader of this society, who 'at the moment of her death ... was universally regretted ... without name, without fortune, without beauty, (she) created for herself the *salon* most in vogue, most eagerly frequented at an epoch counted so many that were brilliant.' Sainte-Beuve went on to beg his readers to ignore previous publications, particularly an 1820 version which he called 'a speculation and fabrication of publishers, one that was unworthy of her mind and of her heart'.<sup>67</sup>

### Searching in vain for these *salons*

While these nineteenth-century descriptions frequently referenced the *salons*, eighteenth-century letters, journals, and dictionaries do not present or define this *salon* institution.<sup>68</sup> These writers do not describe the major tenets of the

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<sup>67</sup> See introduction to Julie de Lespinasse, *Lettres de mademoiselle de Lespinasse* (Paris: Longchamps, 1811) and *Lettres de mademoiselle de Lespinasse, précédées d'une notice de Sainte-Beuve et suivies des autres écrits de l'auteur, et des principaux documents qui le concernent* (Paris, 1893): especially 1-20.

<sup>68</sup> For example, see Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie méthodique ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences des arts*



institution – neither the democratic and egalitarian practices praised by twentieth-century scholars, nor the harmony and unity described by nineteenth-century writers.<sup>69</sup>

In the eighteenth century, a *salon* was not a social institution, or even a type of gathering, but a novel style of room. In other words, a *salon* was a physical setting and an architectural innovation in the eighteenth century. In eighteenth-century dictionaries, the term was typically characterised by its size (depending on the source, a *salon* was a large or small room), and occasionally by its ornamentation. In the *Nouveau Dictionnaire de*

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*et des métiers* (Paris: Briasson, 1751-1780); Jean-François Féraud, *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* (Marseille: 1787-1788); Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire de l'académie françoise* (Lyon: Joseph Duplain, 1776); *Dictionnaire universel* (La Haye: P. Husson, 1727, 1732, 1752, 1771); *Dictionnaire universel: contenant généralement tous les mots françois, tant vieux que modernes, & les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts* (Paris, 1690).

<sup>69</sup> For example, the following almanacs provide descriptions and details of Parisian life at this time, but do not describe the *salon* institution: Hébert Alletz and Pons-Augustine Alletz, *Almanach parisien en faveur des étrangers et des personnes curieuses* (Paris: Duchesnes, 1765); L. Liger, *Le Voyageur fidèle ou le guide des étrangers dans la ville de Paris* (Paris: Ribou, 1715); Claude-François-Xavier Mercier de Compiègne, *Manuel du voyageur à Paris: contenant la description des spectacles* (Paris: Favre, An VII, 1798-1799); Jean-Aymar Piganiol de la Force, *Description historique de la ville de Paris et de ses environs* (Paris: G. Desprez, 1742); Luc-Vincent Thiéry, *Almanach du voyageur à Paris, contentant une description de tous les monumens, chefs d'oeuvres des arts, établissemens utiles et autres objets de curiosité* (Paris: Hardouin et Gattey, 1786); *Guide des amateurs et des étrangers voyageurs à Paris* (Paris: Hardouin et Gattey, 1782).



*l'Académie Française dédié au Roy* (1718), a *salon* was defined as a room in an apartment, often arched and adorned.<sup>70</sup>

In the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1762), the 1718 definition was again offered, with additional examples of how the term might be used: *beau salon, grand salon, salon bien percé, bien éclairé*. In *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française* (1787-1788), a *salon* was not defined separately but rather was listed with *salle*, a room of an apartment. In the *salle* definition, a *salon* was a *petite salle*, or small room. In the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1798), one modification was offered, noting that *salons* are often larger rooms than others in an apartment. However, a secondary definition declared that smaller *salons* were possible, but that these rooms were denoted as *petits salons*. This secondary definition noted that the room was defined by that which it was not: it was not a *cabinet* (typically translated as office) or a *chambre à coucher* (a room for sleeping).<sup>71</sup>

In the *Encyclopédie méthodique ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et métiers* (1751-1780), Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert did not define a *salon*, but they did describe a *Salon*. In their publication, *Salon* was simply a small village in Provence, near Aix and Arles; they also included

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<sup>70</sup> See *Nouveau Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française dédié au Roy*, 2ème édition (Paris, 1718): *salon* entry.

<sup>71</sup> See *salon* entries in *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 4ème édition (Paris, 1762); *Dictionnaire critique de la langue française*, 3 volumes (Marseille: 1787-1788); *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 5ème édition (Paris, 1798).

that Michel Nostradamus died in this village. This capitalised *Salon* also appeared as the title of Denis Diderot's book (1765) on the official art exhibition sponsored by the Academy of Painting and Sculpture in the *Salon Carré* of the Louvre. In the eighteenth century, the term 'Salon' and 'Sallon' came to be used as an abbreviated name for this event.<sup>72</sup>

While contemporary dictionaries do not provide great detail on the eighteenth-century usage of the term '*salon*', architectural books do offer further information on its usage and development. These rooms were introduced by late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century architects, initially presented in books by members of the newly-formed Academy of Architecture and carried out in some of those era's high-end *hôtels*. In *Cours d'Architecture* (1691), Augustin-Charles d'Aviler called for several rooms to meet the daily needs of owners. He envisioned houses outfitted with *salons*, *salles*, and *sallettes* for specific functions, including such spaces as waiting rooms, offices, receiving rooms, eating rooms, company rooms, galleries, and sleeping rooms.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Diderot, Denis, and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie méthodique ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences des arts et des métiers*, (Paris: Briasson, 1751-1780); Denis Diderot, *Salons*, edited by Jean Seznec and Jean Adhémar, 4 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957).

<sup>73</sup> Augustin-Charles D'Aviler, *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, 2 volumes (Paris, 1691-1693); *Dictionnaire d'architecture ou explication de tous les termes dont on se sert dans l'architecture, les mathématiques* (Paris: N. Langlois, 1693).

Twenty years later, Jean-Baptiste Leblond republished an expanded *Cours d'Architecture*, giving details and amendments to d'Aviler's *salons* and *salles* ideas, which were further elaborated on in Jean Mariette, *L'Architecture française* (1727-1739), Germain Boffrand, *Livre d'architecture* (1745), and Jacques-François Blondel's *Architecture française* (1752-1756) and *Cours d'architecture* (1771-1779).<sup>74</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century, these innovations had become popular among many Parisian elites, and the types of *salons* were proliferating. Among the rooms created were *salons de jeux* (game rooms), *salons du billard* (billiard rooms), *salons* and *sallettes des musiques* (music rooms), *salons* and *salles des bains* (bathing rooms), *salons de compagnie* (company rooms), *salles* and *sallettes à manger* (dining rooms).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Jean-Baptiste Leblond, *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, 2 volumes (Paris, 1710, 1720, 1738, 1750, 1760); Jean Mariette, *L'Architecture française*, 3 volumes (Paris, 1727-1739); Germain Boffrand, *Livre d'architecture, contenant les principes généraux de cet art, et les plans, élévations et profils de quelques-uns des bâtimens faits en France et dans les pays étrangers* (Paris: Cavelier Père, 1745 and Farnborough: Gregg, 1969); Jacques-François Blondel, *Architecture française ou recueil des plans, élévations, coupes et profils des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtel et édifices les plus considérables de Paris*, 3 volumes (Paris: C.A. Jombert, 1752-1756); *Cours d'architecture ou traité de la décoration, distribution et construction des bâtimens, contenant les leçons données en 1750, et les années suivantes*, 4 volumes (Paris: Desaint, 1771-1779).

<sup>75</sup> Discussion of this transition was prevalent in architects' writings, including Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture ou l'analogie de cet art avec nos sensations* (Paris: L'Auteur et B. Morin,



In the early nineteenth century, this architectural definition remained (as did the abbreviation for the Louvre exhibition). In 1823, the *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française* defined the *salon* as a room, usually large and ornate. But by mid century, the *salon* had an established third definition. In *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française* (1856), this was no longer simply a physical setting, the *salons* now referred to a type of people, 'la bonne compagnie, les gens du beau monde'.<sup>76</sup>

In *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1863), the secondary definitions of the *salon* expanded on this definition even further, specifically citing the activities of certain individuals from an earlier era. The *salon* did not simply refer to 'good society', but to two *ancien régime* individuals who were described as exemplifying this good *compagnie*: Marie Vichy du Deffand and Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin. Even greater detail and expansion may be found at the turn of the twentieth century. In *La Grande Encyclopédie inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres et des arts* (1885-1902), the secondary definition of the *salon* (after the architectural *salon*) detailed French literary activities, or more

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1780 and Geneva: Minkoff, 1972); Jean-François Monroy, *Traité d'architecture pratique* (Paris: Prault, 1785 and Geneva: Minkoff, 1973); Antoine Quatremère de Quincy, *Encyclopédie méthodique: architecture*, 4 volumes (Paris: Agasse, 1788-1825). For further discussion, see Chapter 4.

<sup>76</sup> See *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française* (Paris: Lefèvre, 1823); *Dictionnaire universel de la langue française* (Paris: Lefèvre, 1856): *salon* entries.

specifically a type of gathering in polite society that played an important literary and political role. The encyclopedia went on to claim that these *salons littéraires* were presided over by women of great beauty and taste who cultivated the art of conversation, one of the hallmarks of French society. In this expanded definition, the literary *salon* had taken on the meaning that is familiar from twentieth-century sources.<sup>77</sup>

It was also in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that related novel terms appeared, derived from the *salon*: *salonnier/salonnière* and *salonnard/salonnarde*.

According to etymological dictionary *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* (1985), the *salonnier* appeared in the 1870s, referring to a journalist who wrote about *salons* (primary definition), a hair stylist (secondary definition), sophisticated and proper style as related to *salons* (third definition), and a regular visitor of a *salon* (fourth definition). In the 1880s and 1890s, the term *salonnière* appeared, referring to a woman who frequented the *salons* (primary definition) or a hair stylist (secondary definition). The terms *salonnard* and *salonnarde* followed as pejorative terms in the early twentieth century, defined as individuals who frequented *salons* but whose taste were sullied by snobbism. Of the four words, the term *salonnière* may be considered to have the most resonance today in the academic

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<sup>77</sup> See *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Paris: L. Hachette, 1863); *La Grande Encyclopédie inventaire raisonné des sciences, des lettres et des arts*, 31 volumes (Paris: 1885-1902): *salon* entries.

community given its frequent usage by scholars in the late twentieth century for strong female leaders establishing and developing the *salon* institution.<sup>78</sup>

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In eighteenth century, however, the vast descriptions of eighteenth-century gatherings present colourful personalities, an abundance of food and drink, pleasure seeking, and an intense sense of status.<sup>79</sup> These accounts portray the self-

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<sup>78</sup> See Alan Rey, editor, *Le Grand Robert de la langue française* (Paris: Le Robert, 1985): *salon*, *salonnier* and *salonnière* entries. For an example of this later usage of *salonnière*, see Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). It is interesting to note that this late twentieth-century definition of '*salonnière*' (female leader in a political institution) is most prominent in Anglo-American scholarship and has had little currency in the French language. Even recently, major dictionaries such as *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (Versailles: Partenaires Livres, 1997) did not include this meaning, simply defining the term as a woman who works in *haute couture*.

<sup>79</sup> For discussions of typical eighteenth-century social habits and customs, see Jean-François de Bastide, *Dictionnaire des mœurs* (Paris: Monory, 1773); Abbé Jean-Baptiste Duchesne-Blanchard, *Le Poète des mœurs, ou les maximes de la sagesse, avec des remarques morales et historiques utiles aux jeunes gens et aux autres personnes pour se conduire sagement dans le monde* (Namur: J.-F. Stapleaux, 1772); Charles-Pinot Duclos, *Considérations sur les mœurs de ce siècle* (Paris: Desaint, 1751); Achille Fournier, *Histoire de l'homme considéré dans ses mœurs, dans ses usages et dans sa vie privée* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1779); Abbé Louis Gauthier, *Traité contre l'amour des parures et le luxe des*



centred activities of Parisians, not an intellectual or political movement for the greater good. The rosy ideal of the *salon* story simply does not stand up when compared to the records of these individuals' everyday lives, interactions, and experiences. These much-discussed *salons* are not grounded in contemporary sources.<sup>80</sup>

Rather, the available historical records describe *soupers, dîners, maisons ouvertes, pots royaux*, garden

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*habits* (Paris: Lottin, 1779); L.B. Liège, *L'Homme content enseignant l'art de bien vivre* (Paris, 1764); Abbé François-André-Adrien Pluquet, *De la Sociabilité*, 2 volumes (Paris: Barrois, 1767, 1770); François-Vincent Toussaint, *Eclaircissement sur les mœurs* (Amsterdam: M.M Rey, 1762); *Les Mœurs* (Paris: 1748).

<sup>80</sup> Given the centrality of the *salon* in eighteenth-century French historiography, one would expect to find abundant descriptions of the *salon* institution in the journals and letters of elite Parisians, but they cannot be found. While the *salons* are listed in several editors' indices, the accompanying contemporary descriptions simply provide descriptions of sociable gatherings. For example, see Nicolas-Edmé Rétif de la Bretonne, *Mes Inscriptions: journal intime 1780-1787* (Plan-de-la-Tour: Editions d'Aujourd'hui, 1983); Henri Paulin Panon Desbassayns, *Petit journal des époques pour servir à ma mémoire: 1784-1786* (Saint-Gilles-les-Hauts: Musée Historique, 1991); Maréchal duc de Croÿ Emmanuel, *Journal inédit du duc de Croÿ, 1718-1784*, edited by viscomte de Grouchy and Paul Cottin (Paris: E. Flammarion, 1906); Claude Adrien Helvétius, *Correspondance générale d'Helvétius* (Toronto and Oxford: University of Toronto Press and Voltaire Foundation, 1981); Baron Holbach, and Baronne d'Holbach, *Lettres inédites du baron et de la baronne d'Holbach à l'abbé Galiani*, edited by Fausto and Nicolini (Paris: E. Leroux, 1931); Alexandrine-Charlotte-Sophie de Rohan-Chabot, duchesse de la Rochefoucauld d'Anville, *Lettres de la duchesse de la Rochefoucauld à William Short*, edited by Donna Pasca (Paris: Mercure de France, 2001).

*fêtes*, card games, and amateur theatricals. They depict these practices in considerable detail and with great fascination. These forms of sociability are described in abundance, but not the *salon* as described by writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The consistency of the historical descriptions – phrases such as 'to hold a *salon*' and 'to attend a *salon*' – have given the mistaken appearance that there was a unified vocabulary of these *salons* in the eighteenth century. To the contrary, as much as recent language about the *salon* has been fixed, the contemporary descriptions of Parisian gatherings have been variable.

Elite Parisians (and their international visitors and friends) would be puzzled to learn that they had been memorialised as '*salon* members'.<sup>81</sup> While they participated in a

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<sup>81</sup> For accounts by international visitors on their experiences in eighteenth-century Paris, see Albert Babeau, *Les Voyageurs en France depuis la Renaissance jusqu'à la Révolution* (Paris: Firmin-Didot Frères, 1885); M. Michot de la Cauw, *Voyage philisophique, politique et pittoresque, nouvellement fait en France* (Amsterdam: J. Bogaert, 1786); Georg Forster, *Voyage philosophique et pittoresque en Angleterre et en France fait en 1790* (Paris: F. Buisson, An IV); William Jones, *Observations in a Journey to Paris by Way of Flanders in the Month of August 1776* (London: G. Robinson, 1777); Nikolaï Mikhaïlovitch Karamzin, *Voyage en France*, translated by A. Legrelle (Paris: Hachette, 1885); Joachim Christoph Nemeitz, *Séjour de Paris, c'est à dire instructions fidèles pour les voyageurs de condition, comment ils doivent se conduire s'ils veulent faire un bon usage de leur temps et de leur argent durant leur séjour à Paris* (Leide: J. Van Abcoude, 1727); Gauthier de Simpré, *Voyage en France de monsieur le comte de Falckenstein, d'après Barbier* (Paris: Cailleau, 1778); Carlo Antonio Pilati di Tassulo, *Voyages en différens pays de l'Europe, en 1774, 1775*



rarefied sociability, no *salon* membership was offered to any of them. In the extant documents from their lives, they did not describe this *salon* institution. However, they did devote considerable attention to their sociability, particularly to the dinner party circuit.<sup>82</sup> The maréchal de Richelieu described several individuals who he believed spent more than 100,000 *livres* a year on the table. He detailed several exceptional *soupers*, such as evenings with four hundred people dining in a garden, where guests took sugar table sculpture as souvenirs; a libertine *dîner* with twenty-nine women; a meal to help madame Lange become the king's mistress; an intimate *souper* with the king and Madame

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*et 1776, ou lettres écrites de l'Allemagne, de la Suisse, de l'Italie, de Sicile et de Paris* (La Haye: C. Plaat, 1777); Philip Playstowe, *The Gentleman's Guide in His Tour Through France* (London: G. Kearsley, 1783); Philip Thicknesse, *Observations on the Customs and Manners of the French Nation, in a Series of Letters in Which that Nation is Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of Some Late Writers* (London: G. Kearsley and N. Young, 1766); Richard Twiss, *A Trip to Paris in July and August 1792* (London: W. Lane, 1792); Wilhelm von Wolzogen, *Journal de voyage à Paris: 1788-1791; suivi du journal politique et de la correspondance diplomatique* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1998).

<sup>82</sup> For contemporary treatises on behaviour at table (in republished form), see Antoine de Courtin, *Nouveau traité de la civilité qui se pratique en France parmi les honnêtes gens* (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1998); Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, *Règles de la bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne; méditations à l'usage des éducateurs; traité de la prière*, edited by F. Anselme (Namur: Edition du Soleil Levant, 1957).



du Bary; and a dinner organised by the maréchal's son for his grandfather, le duc de Froissac.<sup>83</sup>

The comte d'Allonville recorded many of his dinner party experiences, including an evening at a haunted house; a quarrel between the comte de Tressau and Voltaire over supper; a scandal when champagne was proposed to drink *à table*; how he had prepared witty and amusing remarks in the morning to entertain guests in the evening; and how he pretended to have supped with the queen, by lingering in the doorway where the *souper* had just been held. Théophile de Bordeu described the best and worst *soupers*, including an excellent *souper* in the handsome apartment of Lacaze marked by a 'good fire and loyal servant,' and one dreadful evening with l'abbé de La Ville in Versailles where he was seated with individuals beneath his social standing. Jean-Pierre Brissot wrote fondly of the weekly gatherings he hosted, attended by friends Etienne Clavière and Jean de Crèvecoeur, as well as the Mondays dinners held by the marquis de Lafayette that included the duc de la Rochefoucauld, marquis de Chastellux, and marquis de Condorcet among the regular guests.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Maréchal de Richelieu, *Mémoires authentiques du maréchal de Richelieu* (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 1918): especially 24-32, 56-57.

<sup>84</sup> Comte Armand d'Allonville, *Mémoires secrètes de 1770 à 1830* (Paris: Werdet, 1838-1845): 135-142, 182-185; Théophile de Bordeu, *Correspondance*, edited by Martha Fletcher (Montpellier: Université Paul-Valéry, 1977): especially letters dated September 8, 1751, and June 16, 1764; Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville, *Mémoires de Brissot, sur*

Particular *tables* were frequently mentioned in correspondence and journals, such as the sumptuous meals at the opulent homes of les Bourret, les Beaujon, la princesse de Caraman, monsieur Calonne, Labordes, and la marquise de Livry. The Neckers were praised for their high-profile guests. Guillaume Kornmann was well recognised by his friends for the meals he regularly hosted which usually included a large number of international visitors. The 'beautiful Sunday *soupers*' at the Champs-Élysées home of Laurent Grimod de la Reynière, father of the macabre gourmand Alexandre, were remembered fondly by the marquis de Bombelles. The tax farmer Alexandre-Jean-Joseph La Pouplinière hosted suppers that included occasional visits by the celebrated Voltaire.<sup>85</sup>

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*ses contemporains et la Révolution Française, publiés par son fils*, 2 volumes (Paris: Ladvocat, 1830): II: 28-31, 45-49, 126-133.

<sup>85</sup> Henriette-Louise de Waldner de Freundstein, baronne d'Oberkirch, *Mémoires* (Paris: Charpentier, 1853): 14-19, 33-34; see Robert Darnton, *Trends in Radical Propaganda on the Eve of the French Revolution, 1782-1788*, Ph.D. Thesis (Oxford, 1964): especially 131-134, and 166-182. For further contemporary discussion of eating practices, see Vincent La Chapelle with anonymous translator, *Le Cuisinier moderne* (London: 1733); François Marin, *Les Dons de Comus ou les délices de la table* (Paris: Prault Fils, 1739); Menon, *La Cuisinière bourgeoise* (Paris: Guyllyn, 1744, 1746, and 1752); *Le Manuel des officiers de bouche, ou le précis de tous les apprêts que l'on peut faire des alimens pour servir toutes les tables, depuis celles des grands seigneurs jusqu'à celles des bourgeois, suivant l'ordre des saisons et des services* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1759); *Traité historique et pratique de la cuisine, ou le cuisinier instruit à la connaissance des animaux* (Paris: C.J.B. Bauche, 1758).



Family members made appearances in these descriptions, although they were not frequently included in such gatherings. In 1770, Charles Burney found twenty people at the d'Holbach house, including parents and four children, aged from ten to seventeen, a change from the usual adult-only evenings. Madame de Brissart described her routine as having a *souper* every night at her house with friends, except for one night a week that was reserved for family members. Dufort de Cheverny described a similar split between those meals with family and those with friends. He joined a family *dîner* each day, but spent *souper* with friends, making one exception each fortnight 'to be polite' and spending a *souper* with his family.<sup>86</sup>

The duc de Choiseul, a highly regarded statesman who suffered a public downfall in the 1760s when his fiscal policies fell out of favour, filled his exile days with *dîners*, *soupers*, and architecture. Banished from Paris by Louis XV, Choiseul passed years in the Château Chanteloup, a residence originally purchased as a summer retreat but which became his year-round house as well as the site of his enormous energy and architectural passion. In Amboise, Choiseul sent hundreds of letters to friends in Paris, encouraging them to take the risk of visiting Chanteloup to partake in their lively social world. Many

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<sup>86</sup> Charles Burney, *Music, Men, and Manners in France and Italy, 1770*, edited by H. Edmund Poole (London: Folio Society, 1969):78-79; Jean-Nicholas Dufort de Cheverny, *Memoirs*, 2 volumes (Paris: Les Amis de l'Histoire, 1970): 54-56.



took him up on his offer, as a small structure on the property still attests. The names of visitors and supporters were added to the walls of a *chinoise*-style pagoda that he had built on the property for the occasion.<sup>87</sup>

Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, a prominent architect of residential properties and a speculative developer of the fashionable Chaussée d'Antin neighbourhood, spent considerable time at his clients' homes in the evenings. He viewed the dinner party circuit as a significant part of his efforts of business development and commercial expansion. Without such participation in Parisian sociability, Ledoux considered it unlikely that he would have been awarded as many high-end and large-scale projects in Paris, such commissions as a temple decorated with Terpsichore, the goddess of dance for the lead performer of the Comédie Française; a compound filled with grottoes, caves,

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<sup>87</sup> Etienne-François duc de Choiseul, *Choiseul à Rome, 1754-1757, lettres et mémoires inédits*, edited by vicomte de Maurice Boutry (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1895); *Mémoires du duc de Choiseul*, preface by Jean-Pierre Guicciardi and notes by Philippe Bonnet (Paris: Mercure de France, 1987); Gaston Maugras, *La Disgrace du duc et la duchesse de Choiseul, la vie à Chanteloup, le retour à Paris, la mort* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1913); *Le Duc et la duchesse de Choiseul, leur vie intime, leurs amis, et leur temps* (Paris: 1902); *La Duchesse de Choiseul et le patriarche de Ferney* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1889). At Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, see the private papers of Vichy du Deffand which include sixty-two letters between the duchesse du Choiseul and Vichy du Deffand. At the Archives Nationales, see the Minutier Central de Notaires de Paris, LXXXIV, Rés 615 Inventory after death of duc de Choiseul, June 8, 1785.

and replicas of ancient ruins for madame de Thélusson; a traditional Marais *hôtel* for the Hallwyl family; and an elaborate rural pavilion for the luxurious entertaining of madame du Barry, the king's mistress. Being perceived as a (near) peer by some aristocrats helped Ledoux to distinguish himself from a number of his competitors in the fields of design and construction.<sup>88</sup>

According to the social observer Louis Lémery, the greatest joy of living in Paris was the abundant opportunity for sophisticated dining. Eating practices and table manners were the means by which French men and women distinguished themselves from less civilised countries. He argued that other less sophisticated peoples did not devote attention to their eating habits, nor take enough care to regulate and vary their practices. In France, Lémery noted, these practices were well understood and resulted in two exceptional meals every day, *le dîner* and *le souper*.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> For further information on Ledoux's practices, see Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art des mœurs et de la législation* (Paris: L'Auteur, 1804), which was coloured by his tumultuous years during the French Revolution when he was imprisoned. For further information on Ledoux, see Michel Gallet, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 1736-1806* (Paris: Picard, 1980); Daniel Rabreau, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736-1806): l'architecture et les fastes du temps* (Bordeaux: William Blake & Co., 2000); Anthony Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990).

<sup>89</sup> Louis Lémery, *Traité des alimens* (Paris, 1755): 12-14.

Charles-Joseph Panckoucke shared Lémery's view and described the afternoon *dîner* and the evening *souper* in great detail.<sup>90</sup> Panckoucke described the best way to serve drinks, the proper settings for varying numbers of people, appropriate displays of food, arrangements of dishes at each course, and the importance of having plates arrive simultaneously and then laid out in a strict symmetrical pattern. Panckoucke prescribed that a large object (such as a tureen) should mark the centre of a table, and that important preparations, such as elaborate garnished roast meats or poached fish had to be set at either end. He reminded readers of the importance of pre-dessert table preparations, notably the changing of the tablecloth and the removing of condiments such as salt cellars and mustard pots before dessert was served.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> See entries for *dîner* and *souper* in Charles-Joseph Panckoucke, *Encyclopédie méthodique*, 10 volumes (Paris: Panckoucke Libraire, 1788).

<sup>91</sup> For further contemporary discussion of these practices, see Nicolas de Blegny, *Le Bon sage du thé, du caffè et du chocolat pour la préservation et pour la guérison des maladies* (Paris: E. Michalet, 1687); M. Emy, *L'Art de bien faire les glaces d'office ou les vrais principes pour congeler tous les rafraîchissements* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1768); Joseph Gilliers, *Le Cannaméliste français, ou nouvelle instruction pour ceux qui désirent d'apprendre l'office, rédigé en forme de dictionnaire, contentant les noms, les descriptions, les usages, les choix et les principes de tout ce qui se pratique dans l'office* (Nancy: J.B.H. Le Clerc, 1751). For further analysis of these habits, see Catherine Armingon and Béatrix Saule, editors, *Tables royales et festins de cour en Europe 1661-1789: actes du colloque international, Palais des Congrès, Versailles, 25-26 février 1994* (Paris: Ecole du Louvre, 2004); Jean-Pierre Babelon, *Versailles et*



According to social observer Louis-Sébastien Mercier, the streets of Paris were void of *le monde* at three in the afternoon because everyone was at *dîner*, and then again at eleven when all *achève de souper*.<sup>92</sup> He described a fierce competition to enter the correct houses for these meals, noting that high society spent several hours a week visiting the various *hôtels*, giving their names in the hopes of being received. Once greeted, guests aimed to cultivate a relationship so that a further invitation to stay for a meal would be forthcoming. Mercier noted that this type of visiting, entertaining, and dining was central to the lives of fashionable people. He went on to give great details of these habits – eleven pages on table etiquette, six pages devoted to cooks; three pages on wine, two pages for table arrangements, and two pages on oysters.<sup>93</sup>

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*les tables royales en Europe XVIIème-XIXème siècles* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1993).

<sup>92</sup> For analysis of these practices, see Daniel Alcouffe, *Le Table et le Partage* (Paris: Musée de Louvre, 1986); Martin Aurell, Olivier Dumoulin, and Françoise Thelanon, *La Sociabilité à table: commensalité et convivialité à travers les âges: actes du colloque de Rouen 14-17 novembre 1990* (Rouen: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 1992); Donna Corbin, curator, *Just Desserts: A Recreation of an 18th-Century Table Setting* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, November 1999-May 2000); Jean-Louis Flandrin, 'Les Heures des repas en France avant XIXe siècle,' in *Le Temps de manger: alimentation, emploi du temps et rythmes sociaux*, edited by Maurice Aymard, Jean-Claude Grignon, and Françoise Sabban (Paris: Edition de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1993): 197-226.

<sup>93</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris de Louis-Sébastien Mercier*, 12 volumes (Amsterdam, 1782-1788 and Paris, 1906): I: 63, II:

*Encyclopédist* authors devoted attention to the timing of meals, noting a change at mid-century when court society and the members of the grand houses of Paris began to *souper* at ten o'clock in the evening, a move from when the evening meal had taken place as early as six in the evening. The *Encyclopédie* articles also offered a definition of the *après-soupe*, that period of time after the *souper* and before *coucher* (sleeping), which was characterised by late-night leisure and sociability for *le monde*. The *Encyclopédie* writers went on to find a link between Parisians' social practices and that of the early Romans, noting that this ancient society had also enjoyed a *souper*, but not as a meal focused on friends, but rather as one characterised as a family affair in which friends sometimes joined. These writers went on to describe the places of the Roman *souper*, rooms known as *atrio*, built within vestibules that were open to the eyes of the world. These *atrio* were set aside exclusively for meals, places where considerable attention was given to appearance and organisation.<sup>94</sup>

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80, IV: 148, 151. For similar comments, see Louis-Antoine de Caraccioli, *Dictionnaire critique, pittoresque et sentencieux propre à faire connaître les sages du siècle*, 3 volumes (Lyon: B. Duplain, 1768): I: 108-109, III: 170-174. For plays and novels on this subject, see Bibliothèque Nationale Manuscripts, NAF 2994, *Le souper des dupes*, 1771; Archives d'Arsenal, Louis-Edmé Billardon de Sauvigny, *Le Petit soupe, ou l'Abbé qui veut parvenir* (Paris, 1782); Anne-Gabriel Meusnier de Querlon, *Les Soupers de Daphéné et les Dortoirs de Lacédémone. Anecdotes Greques ou Fragments Historiques* (Oxford, 1746).

<sup>94</sup> See entries for *après-soupe* and *souper* in Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie méthodique ou dictionnaire raisonné des*

Even retrospectively, many members of *le monde* fondly remembered the *soupers*, including the writer André Morellet who reminisced about a monthly Sunday meal in which he had brought together Amélie Suard, Jean-François Arnaud, and Jacques Delille, among others. According to Morellet, d'Holbach's Sunday and Thursday dinners were also well attended, usually by ten to fifteen people drawn from Parisian and European society, noting there was plenty of good food, excellent wine, fine coffee; plenty of discussion and never a quarrel.<sup>95</sup> Jean-François Marmontel later recorded his first *dîner* with mademoiselle Navarre, an actress and love interest as well as *petits soupers* held at the Geoffrin, Kaunitz, Mercy, and Seckendorff homes. While

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*sciences des arts et des métiers* (Paris: Briasson, 1751-1780), or more efficiently, in its electronic version. For some discussion of the composition of these elites and their daily practices, see Christine Adams, *A Taste for Comfort and Status: A Bourgeois Family in Eighteenth-Century France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); *La Noblesse française au XVIIIe siècle: la vie quotidienne* (Paris: Hachette, 1995); *La Vie quotidienne au temps de Louis XVI* (Paris: Hachette, 1984); William Doyle, *The Old European Order, 1660-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Yves Durand, *Les Fermiers généraux aux XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971 and Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1996); Franklin Lewis Ford, *Robe and Sword: The Regrouping of the French Aristocracy After Louis XIV* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953); Robert Forster and Elberg Forster, editors, *European Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1969).

<sup>95</sup> Abbé André Morellet, *Mémoires sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la Révolution; précédés de l'éloge de l'abbé Morellet*, 2 volumes (Paris: Ladvocat, 1821): 277-278.



he recorded how the Revolution had ruined him, he was able to find great comfort in his *ancien régime* memories.<sup>96</sup>

Henriette-Lucie Dillon, marquise de le Tour du Pin de Gouvernet, described how *soupers* formed the '*veritable moment de la société*.' La Tour du Pin described how, beginning at 9:30 each evening, all who where beautiful, elegant, and good in Paris gathered to seduce each other. La Tour du Pin provided several vignettes of the appearance and etiquette of these leading individuals, such as the duchesse de Biran and the princesse de Poix. She compared their styles to the manners of those who followed, describing how the Revolution brought individuals to power who cared little for respect, manners, and politeness, calling them individuals who were truly grotesques.<sup>97</sup> Elisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun remembered how it had been in the habit of French society for a dozen friends to gather at the end of each day. In her view, the *soupers* of Parisian good society showed their superiority to that of all of Europe.<sup>98</sup> The baron Besenval noted evenings hosted by maréchale de Luxembourg, writing that as soon as the wine had gone to the guests' heads, 'we began speaking what is called English, that is to say the most liberal principles, everything

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<sup>96</sup> Jean-François Marmontel, *Mémoires*, edited by John Renwick (Clermont-Ferrand: G. de Bussac, 1972): 149, 196, 206, 264-267.

<sup>97</sup> Henriette-Lucie Dillon, marquise de la Tour du Pin de Gouvernet, *Mémoires de le marquise de la Tour du Pin: journal d'une femme de cinquante ans 1778 – 1815* (Paris: R. Chapelot, 1920): 7-8, 29-31.

<sup>98</sup> Louise-Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun, *Souvenirs de madame Louise-Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun* (Paris: H. Fournier, 1835-1836): 58-59.

was named with its proper name, and most often we never parted without a few *complaisances* mutually of the men and the women, which continued up until the last favours'.<sup>99</sup>

International visitors also partook in the city's social whirl. Reviewing their private papers and letters, one finds hundreds of descriptions of their interactions with Parisians that shed light on the various forms of elite sociability. Ferdinando Galiani, an economist and proponent of free-market systems, lived in Paris from 1759 to 1769 and served as the secretary of the Neapolitan embassy. His writings brought him accolades from French literary luminaries such as Voltaire, who expressed an interest in his theories on France's commerce in wheat. In his diplomatic role, Galiani befriended many prominent Parisians and was a frequent guest in the homes of the capital's elites. Upon returning to Naples in late 1769, he maintained a frequent correspondence with his Parisian friends, recalling his affairs with affection and wistful nostalgia. 'There are *ni de dîners, ni de soupers* in Naples,' he wrote, going on to express a longing for the ones he had experienced in the French capital. He wrote that

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<sup>99</sup> Baron de Besenval, *Mémoires de monsieur le baron de Besenval...écrits par lui-même, imprimés sur son manuscrit original, et publiés par son exécuteur testamentaire, contenant beaucoup de particularités et d'anecdotes sur la cour, sur les ministres et les règnes de Louis XV et Louis XVI, et sur les événements du temps* (Paris: F. Buisson, 1805): 212-216.

'anything coming from Paris wakes my lulled soul stuck in a void, lacking pleasures, great occupations, and real friends'.<sup>100</sup>

Alessandro Verri, a member of a prominent Milanese aristocratic family, spent eight months in Paris and London where he met Julie de Lespinasse and enjoyed dinners at the home of Anne-Catherine and Claude-Adrien Helvétius. His overall impression of Parisian life was rather negative, and he wrote of being taken by surprise at the nonsense discussed at Parisian gatherings, stating that these evenings' primary objective appeared to be filling silences with whatever came to mind. Critiquing the pomp and formality of Parisian sociability, he described being relieved only by fleeting moments of *libertine* behaviour. Verri expressed his preference for London living where he described finding the greatest liberty he had every known.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ferdinando Galiani, *Correspondance inédite de l'abbé Ferdinand Galiani, pendant les années 1765 à 1783, avec madame d'Épinay, le baron d'Holbach, le baron de Grimm, Diderot et autres*, edited by B. Mercier Saint-Léger (Paris: J.-G. Dentu, 1818): especially 43-48.

<sup>101</sup> Pietro and Alessandro Verri, *Voyage à Paris et à Londres. Correspondance d'Alessandro et Pietro Verri (1766-1767)*, translated by Monique Baccelli, preface by Michel Delon (Paris: Editions Laurence Teper, 2004): especially 44-49, 548-553. On the subject of the Helvétius family, see Claude-Adrien Helvétius, *Correspondance générale d'Helvétius*, 5 volumes (Toronto and Oxford: University of Toronto Press and Voltaire Foundation, 1981-2004). The Helvétius evenings, organised in partnership, have been transformed by subsequent writers. Claude-Adrien Helvétius has been pushed to the background of accounts of their social life. These selective processes are at work in Antoine Guillois' *Le*



La baronne d'Oberkirch, a high-ranking noblewoman from South Alsace, recorded three extended visits in Paris in her journal. She devoted considerable attention to the *dîners* and *soupers* of her visits, speaking fondly of the dining room at the 'true temple' of the Beaujons's *folie*, *tric-trac* parties with the Bourbons at their Varenne *hôtel*, and nights with the Luxembourgs at their *palaix*. An evening at court, a *souper* of 100 people per table made a strong impression, as did the dining room furniture at the Hôtel Thélusson designed by the craftsman Desguerrès of the rue Saint Honoré. Oberkirch described enjoying nearly all the people and places of Paris, with just a few exceptions, such as the Neckers whose *hôtel* gatherings she found unbearable.<sup>102</sup>

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*Salon de Madame Helvétius* (1894) as well as in recent books. One scholarly monograph, published in 1999, is devoted to the life of Madame Helvétius and focuses almost exclusively on her *salon*. In this book, she continues to be elevated to the status of *salon* organiser, credited with hosting the most important *salon* of its day, central to the evolution of philosophical ideas and their application in society. It relies, however, on late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century biographies, and perpetuates an idea in circulation that an 'institution' was founded in the months after her husband's death. It also continues the common theme of these writings that the most favoured position for women, particularly widows and unmarried women, was the role of *salonnière*.

<sup>102</sup> La baronne d'Oberkirch, *Mémoires de la baronne d'Oberkirch sur la cour de Louis XVI et la société française avant 1789*, edited by Suzanne Burkard (Paris: Mercure de France, 1970 and 1989): 194, 209, 211-212, 304, 306, 307, which she wrote in 1789 and described three visits to Paris in 1769, 1782, and 1784.

Two American diplomats had a favourable reaction to their Parisian reception. Benjamin Franklin arrived in Paris when he was seventy, tasked with the assignment of finding money, guns, uniforms, and ultimately ships in which to send supplies back to the revolutionary armies. He found some time to make the Parisian rounds, mentioning Vichy du Deffand in one letter, and describing the warm reception he enjoyed in many French households. In a letter published in the *Journal de Paris*, he gave a glimpse of his perspective on the city's nightlife, describing the inhabitants' passion for playing games all night (including his own late-night enthusiasm for chess) and sleeping until midday.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> For more about Franklin's experiences in Paris, see Claude Fohlen, *Benjamin Franklin: l'Américain des Lumières* (Paris: Editions Payot, 2000); *Les Pères de la Révolution Américaine* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1989); Robert Forster and A. Goodwin, editors, *The American and French Revolutions, The French Revolution and the New Elite, 1800-1850* (Cambridge: University Press, 1965); Nicole Fouché, *Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson: aux sources de l'amitié franco-américaine 1776-1808* (Paris: M. Houdiard, 2000); Benjamin Franklin, *Benjamin Franklin's Memoirs*, edited by Max Farrand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949); *Correspondance de Benjamin Franklin*, edited by Edouard Laboulaye (Paris: L. Hachette, 1866); Stacy Schiff, *A Great Improvisation: Franklin, France, and the Birth of America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005). The Benjamin Franklin Collection (Yale University) holds the world's largest number of private papers of Franklin, and provides another example of *salon* claims in eighteenth-century historiography. In the introduction to this collection, the editor claims that Benjamin Franklin was invited to the Paris *salons* (p. lvi). For example, the author writes that 'Madame du Deffand invited

When Thomas Jefferson arrived in 1784 to negotiate transatlantic treaties, he initially stayed at a house in La Chaussée d'Antin and then settled into a *hôtel* on the Champs-Élysées where he spent four years in the city centre. Like Franklin, he was charged with establishing commercial ties between his young nation and the leading European countries, whose ministers gathered at the court of Versailles. Jefferson remained in France for five years and became fully immersed in the city's political life and social customs, through the early events of the French Revolution, witnessing the opening of the Estates-General and the storming of the Bastille. Like Franklin, Jefferson became enamoured of the luxurious dinner party circuit of Paris.<sup>104</sup>

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him to her *salon*' and cites the source as Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis, *The Yale Collections* (New Haven: Yale University Press and London: G. Cumberlege, Oxford University Press, 1946). However, that source does not substantiate that claim. In the extant letters of Benjamin Franklin, which have been electronically catalogued, Vichy du Deffand is mentioned just once but without details or descriptions (see 23:83).

<sup>104</sup> For more about Jefferson in Paris, see Claude Fohlen, *Jefferson à Paris, 1784-1789* (Paris: Perrin, 1995); Thomas Jefferson, *Memoir, Correspondence and Miscellanies, from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1830); *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-1965); *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson, Being his Autobiography, Correspondence, Reports, Messages, Addresses, and Other Writings Official and Private* (Washington: Taylor and Maury, 1854); Thomas Jefferson and marquis de Gilbert du Motier La Fayette, *The Letters of Lafayette and Jefferson* (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1929); Howard C. Rice, *Thomas Jefferson's Paris* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); George Green Shackelford, *Thomas Jefferson's Travels in Europe, 1784-1789*



John Adams also received a high degree of French hospitality but, unlike his two American counterparts, was dismissive of the frivolity and superficiality of his new acquaintances and associates. Highly critical of Franklin and Jefferson's efforts toward the French, he found both men too accommodating and accepting of Parisian practices. Adams found the French court unbearable and was highly critical of the libertine ways of elite Parisians. When he left in the summer of 1785 to become the American minister in London, he was delighted to depart.<sup>105</sup>

Visitors from London often expressed mixed reactions to their Parisian counterparts. They frequently commented on their surprise that social gatherings were composed of men and women, rather than the all-male evenings to which they were accustomed. English diplomat George Selwyn, a middle-ranking English diplomat, wrote of his difficulty in acclimating to these rituals, the formal etiquette of Parisians, and the strong presence of women.<sup>106</sup> London visitor Horace Walpole

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(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Douglas L. Wildon and Lucia C. Stanton, editors, *Jefferson Abroad* (New York: Modern Library, 1999).

<sup>105</sup> For more about the Adams family's experiences in Paris, see Abigail Adams, *The Book of Abigail and John: Selected Letters of the Adams Family, 1762-1784* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); *New Letters of Abigail Adams, 1788-1801* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1947).

<sup>106</sup> John Heneage Jesse, *George Selwyn and His Contemporaries: With Memoirs and Notes*, 4 volumes (London: Bickers, 1882): especially II: 4-11 and III: 99-110; S. Parnell Kerr, *George Selwyn and the Wits* (London:

considered the mixed-gender quality to be a distinguishing feature of Parisian sociability, noting dinners at the homes of the Condorcets, Helvétius, Lavoisiers, Suarins, and Suards. Also focusing on Parisians' eating habits, Walpole noted that the midday meal was quite late due to the late risers of the city, and that the evening meal sometimes started as late as ten. At these *soupers*, he described how eating and gaming went hand-in-hand, how 'they constantly tap a rubber before supper, get up in the middle of the game, finish it after a meal of three courses and a dessert, add another rubber to it and then take their knotting bags, and draw together into a circle and start some topic of literature or irreligion and chat till it is time to go to bed – that is til you would think it time to get up again.'<sup>107</sup>

David Hume, who arrived in Paris in 1763 to serve as the English embassy's secretary, described how he was fêted on the Parisian dinner party circuit. In a letter sent to Adam Smith soon after his arrival, he wrote about being entertained by the former president Hénault, whom he described as 'now decaying, (but who) retains that amiable character which made him

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Methuen & Co., 1909); George Augustus Selwyn, *George Selwyn; His Letters and His Life*, edited by E.S. Roscoe and Helen Clergue (London: T.F. Unwin, 1899). For extensive correspondence between George Selwyn and Marie Vichy du Deffand, see Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Selwyn files.

<sup>107</sup> See Horace Walpole to Lady Suffolk in Horace Walpole, *Correspondence*, 48 volumes, edited by W.S. Lewis and A. Dayle Wallace (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-1983): See 1765-1766: 65.

once the delight of all France'. To his friend Dr. Blair, he described how much he enjoyed meals at the home of Hénault, praising his cook, Le Grange; he claimed that Hénault 'always had the best cook and the best company in Paris.'<sup>108</sup> Arthur Young, who traveled in France for three years, noted that there was nothing quite like dining in Paris – the roast beef was almost as good as back home, the desserts were out of this world, and one enjoyed the highest level of conversation and company; the ultimate place to meet and greet. Young described night after night: the oysters, duck, fish, fruit, wine, liqueur, dessert, all laid out on exquisite Sèvres porcelain.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> David Hume, *New Letters of David Hume*, edited by Raymond Klibansky and Ernest C. Mossner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954): 168-170.

<sup>109</sup> Arthur Young, *Travels During the Years 1787, 1788 and 1789, Undertaken More Particularly with a View to Ascertaining the Cultivation, Wealth, Resources, and National Prosperity of the Kingdom of France* (London: Bury Saint Edmunds, 1794): 114, 116, 189. For overviews on other British visitors in Paris, see Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour* (Dover, NH: Croom Helm 1985); John Lough, *France Observed in the Seventeenth Century by British Travellers* (Stocksfield: Oriel, 1985); *France on the Eve of the Revolution: British Travellers' Observations, 1763-1788* (London: Croom Helm, 1987). For contemporary sources, see Anna Francesca Cradock, *Journal inédit, traduit de l'Anglais par madame Delphin* (Paris: Balleyguier, 1896); *Journal de Madame Cradock: journal d'un voyage en France 1783-1786* (Paris: Perrin, 1896); David Garrick, *Journal Describing his Visit to France and Italy in 1763*, edited by G.W. Stone (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1939); Thomas Gray, *Correspondence*, edited by Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935); Horace Walpole, *Horace*



These individuals – the so-called *salon* members – would not have recognised themselves in the nineteenth-century portrayals. Moreover, those women historically singled out as the institutional leaders, or *salonnières*, would have been astonished to learn that they held *salons*.<sup>110</sup> These women most celebrated by subsequent French writers – Marie Vichy du Deffand, Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, and occasionally Julie de Lespinasse – did not describe or even mention their *salon* institutions or anything resembling a proto-democratic society. Their own writings fail to support the interpretation of nineteenth-century writers of the *salon* story. Instead, their writings underscore the differences between the everyday practices of their lives in the eighteenth century and the idealisation created about them during the nineteenth century.

To move forward, then, it will be helpful to examine a broader base of sources from the eighteenth century, taking a close look at the people, practices, and places that have historically been associated with the *salon*, but have been obscured

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*Walpole's Correspondence with Madame du Deffand and Wiart*, edited by W.S. Lewis and Warren Hunting Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939); *Letters*, edited by Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904); *Letters 1775 January 4, 13, 19, 27, 31, London to Madame du Deffand, Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Library: Lewis Walpole Collection, 1775).

<sup>110</sup> The term of *salonnière*, defined today as a woman who leads the *salon* institution, emerged in the late nineteenth century and has been used frequently in the twentieth century. It was not a contemporary term.

by this legend.<sup>111</sup> It will be necessary to review: a) private writings of these individuals, particularly correspondence, personal journals, travel accounts, property successions, and wills; b)

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<sup>111</sup> For this perspective, I draw on the methodologies of material culture, including the work of Arjun Appadurai, editor, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Leora Auslander, *Taste and Power: Furnishing Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford, editors, *Consumers and Luxury: Consumer Culture in Europe* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Ann Bermingham and John Brewer, editors, *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (New York: Routledge, 1995); John Brewer and Roy Porter, editors, *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London: Routledge, 1994); Susan B. Hanley, *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan: The Hidden Legacy of Material Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Mimi Hellman, 'Furniture, Sociability, and the Work of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century France,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32:4 (1999): 415-445; Mary Hollingsworth, *The Cardinal's Hat: Money, Ambition, and Housekeeping in a Renaissance Court* (London: Profile, 2004); Chandra Mukerji, *From Graven Images: Patterns of Modern Materialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Daniel Roche, *A History of Everyday Things: The Birth of Consumption in France, 1600-1800*, translated by Brian Pearce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Carolyn Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets: The Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996); Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Rebecca L. Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000); Rochelle Ziskin, *The Place Vendôme: Architecture and Social Mobility in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

internal household records, including inventories, budgets, invoices, shopping lists, staff instructions, and cooking registers; c) publications such as newspapers, classified advertisements, etiquette and civility books, household manuals, treatises, philosophical writings, novels, almanacs, social commentaries; city descriptions found in guidebooks, and government records; d) visual records such as drawings, designs, and paintings; and e) material culture such as furniture, clothing, and food. Given the historical placement of the *salon* institution in the upscale houses of Paris, particularly close examination will be given to these building records, contracts of purchases and sales, architects' published writings and personal correspondence, business records and manuals, household plans and renovations, construction and masonry records, and city administration archives, especially tax records, surveys, bankruptcies, and property assessments.<sup>112</sup>

We will examine specific buildings as well as the representations of these constructions. This will include considerations of how the transformation and differentiation of

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<sup>112</sup> French objects and material culture have not been fully explored for the evidence they offer, having been most frequently been studied as the luxury goods of French high civilisation. Books serving the luxury-goods markets, produced by designers and dealers, have strengthened the dominance of this historical interpretation. Some museum curators have supported this notion by concentrating on rare, expensive material culture, from haute cuisine to Sèvres porcelain. See Philippa Glanville and Hilary Young, editors, *Elegant Eating: Four Hundred Years of Dining in Style* (London: V&A Publications, 2002); John Whitehead, *The French Interior in the Eighteenth Century* (London: L. King, 1992).



these places accommodated changing forms of sociability.<sup>113</sup>

Cultural material will be used as a means to explore political and social transformations in eighteenth-century Paris and to consider how these changes affected living environments. This exploration will help to revise our understanding of the evolving forms and functions of eighteenth-century social practices. A different sort of picture will emerge, one that will draw a distinction between the everyday practices of the eighteenth century and the idealisation created about this period during the nineteenth century. Setting aside the abstractions and distortions of the legend will open a new path, one that presents specific people, everyday practices, and actual places.

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<sup>113</sup> The study of places has been the near exclusive domain of architectural historians and patrimony professionals. They have primarily focused on studying property as sites of luxury, tending toward description and documentation, emphasising stylistic attributes but omitting critical analysis. For examples, see Béatrice d'Andia, *De Bagatelle à Monceau: 1778-1978, les folies au XVIIIe siècle à Paris: Domaine de Bagatelle* (Paris: Musée Carnavalet, 1979); Michel Gallet, *Demeures Parisiennes: l'époque de Louis XIV* (Paris: Le Temps, 1964).

## Examining the everyday lives of Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin

In 1893, Sainte-Beuve described a group of Parisians, heading to the baths of Aix in Savoie, who had encountered 'a series of accidents (along their journey) – tempest, thunder and lightning, hindrances and delays of all kinds. On arriving at Aix, the (arriving) persons found the people of the *hôtel* grouped at the door, very anxious and inquiring. But they, the travellers, had seen nothing, and noticed nothing of the accidents'. The reason: for their entire journey, they had been speaking only of their eager anticipation of *ancien régime* letters that were soon to be published.<sup>114</sup>

At that time, books of eighteenth-century correspondence attracted considerable attention, but were not wholly reliable; their original contents were often published in edited form.<sup>115</sup> Today, however, due to the careful preservation of eighteenth-century materials in numerous collections, we can

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<sup>114</sup> See Sainte-Beuve's introduction to Julie de Lespinasse, *Lettres de mademoiselle de Lespinasse, précédées d'une notice de Sainte-Beuve et suivies des autres écrits de l'auteur, et des principaux documents qui le concernent*, (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1893): 2-3

<sup>115</sup> For further analysis of choices by nineteenth-century editors, see Section 2, 'Challenging the classic narrative of the Enlightenment *salon*'.

examine these documents in their unaltered state. By doing so, we can learn more about the lives of Marie Vichy du Deffand and Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin – the two individuals historically singled out as the Enlightenment '*salonnières*' – than has been possible for the past two centuries. As discussed in the first chapter, from the nineteenth century until now, it has been these two women who have been described as the leaders and/or leading hostesses of the Enlightenment *salon*. While other women have occasionally been described as taking on a '*salonnière*' role in French historiography, they have not been placed on par with Vichy du Deffand or Geoffrin who have held the distinction of leading Enlightenment '*salonnières*'. Given their importance in *salon* history, it will be particularly important to examine their everyday lives and practices in this chapter.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> See Chapter 1, 'Historiographical Claims about the French *salon*': 9-13

for a discussion of the centrality of these two figures in the nineteenth century (for example, that these two women were the only two individuals singled out in Emile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la Langue Française*, Paris: L. Hachette, 1872) and also singled out in more recent historiography of the Enlightenment *salon*. As described in Chapter 1, there is one other Enlightenment individual worthy of mention, Julie de Lespinasse, who was the niece of Vichy du Deffand and on a few occasions has been cited as a '*salonnière*' of the Enlightenment period, of lesser importance than Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin. Lespinasse's habits were quite different from the nineteenth-century claims, and are also discussed in this section, Chapter 3: 97-100.



Some of their personal documents have been overlooked or unexamined by past scholars of the *salon*; others have recently become available. The range of materials is considerable, and includes journals, correspondence (in their original and unedited form), and contracts (wills, legal arrangements, household documents, inventories, and financial transactions). These sources present an opportunity to evaluate the dissonance between the twentieth-century stories and the actual lives of these two eighteenth-century women. Upon examination of this contemporary documentation, a more accurate picture of Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin emerges, one that replaces the distorted portrayals of other eras [Figures 1 and 2].

Vichy du Deffand recorded her life through letters and journals in exceptional detail, from the major events of her life to the more mundane happenings. In more than 1,500 extant letters, Vichy du Deffand corresponded with family members and friends about a wide range of subjects, including current events, financial transactions, and European travel. She discussed the educational and social development of her nephew with her older brother. Writing about Parisian real estate to her younger brother, she expressed concerns that she could not afford an elegant and spacious apartment. When her eyesight began to fail, she

described her great fear and anxiety to her niece.<sup>117</sup> To her cousin, she conveyed her deep sadness at the king's decision to banish her cousins from Paris. To her friend Horace Walpole, Vichy du Deffand discussed the American colonies, while making special requests to send her favourite British tea. In a daily journal, which she dictated to her lead servant Wiart, she also recorded the meals she enjoyed, the quality of her dinner companions, and her favourite card games. In her opinion, the *souper* was one of mankind's chief businesses, of which she noted that she had forgotten the other three. However, nowhere did she describe her *salon* or the characteristics later attributed to her gatherings.

Immediately evident from these personal writings of Vichy du Deffand is the colourful life that she led. Her existence was far from the sober and serious behaviour that has been so frequently venerated.<sup>118</sup> Most noticeably, she was an intensely social individual, a *habitué* of the dinner party circuit, the primary form of sociability for elite Parisians at that time. In letter after letter, she comes across as intensely focused on the goings-on of this social world, its pleasures, woes, and anxieties. She was meticulous in cataloguing *dîners* and *soupers*, with particular

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<sup>117</sup> Vichy du Deffand did not indicate the reason for her medical condition. She did not appear to know why she was becoming blind.

<sup>118</sup> For the most recent account, see Inès Murat, *Madame du Deffand 1696 – 1780: La lettre et l'esprit* (Paris: Perrin, 2003); further discussion of these characterisations may be found in Section 1, 'Historiographical claims about the French *salon*'.

attention to the romantic interests and activities of friends and acquaintances. Occasional references to the city's cultural output were also evident, such as new theatrical productions that she critiqued for abandoning the traditional values of *grand siècle* creations. Above all else, though, she focused on gambling – her favourite games were *piquet*, *écarte*, and *cavagnole* – and she devoted considerable energy to developing strategies to win, including identifying partners and tables where her odds might be improved. Vichy du Deffand favoured such houses as Mirepoix, where different games were interspersed with courses, while she praised Conti's pavilion parties for the quality of the gamblers.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> The colourful life of Vichy du Deffand is most evident in her own correspondence. See Marie Vichy du Deffand, la marquise du, *Correspondance complète de madame du Deffand avec la duchesse de Choiseul, l'abbé Barthélemy et monsieur Craufort*, edited by Sainte-Aulaire (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1866); *Correspondance complète de la marquise du Deffand avec ses amis le Président Hénault-Montesquieu-d'Alembert-Voltaire-Horace Walpole* (Paris: H. Plon, 1865); *Correspondance inédite de madame du Deffand avec d'Alembert, Montesquieu, le président Hénault, la duchesse du Maine ...* (Paris: L. Collin, 1809); *Letters of the Marquise du Deffand to the Honorable Horace Walpole, Afterwards Earl of Orford, from the Year 1766 to the Year 1780* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1810); *Letters to and From Madame du Deffand and Julie de Lespinasse*, edited by Warren Hunting Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938); *Lettres à Horace Walpole – 1766-1780*, 3 volumes (London: Methuen & Co., 1912); *Lettres à Voltaire*, introduction and notes by Joseph Trabucco (Paris: Editions Bossard, 1922); *Lettres de madame du Deffand: 1742-1780*, preface by Chantal Thomas (Paris: Mercure de France, 2002);



The papers of Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin do not support claims about her *salon*, but they do detail her lead ownership of the Saint-Gobain company from 1749 to 1779, the mirror and glass business that served as the source of her family's wealth. Her business records and correspondence from that period demonstrate her preoccupation with the business. Since the late seventeenth century, the Geoffrins had led the company's strategy to capitalise on their break-through technology of casting large pieces of glass through semi-mechanised production. Upon her husband's death in 1749, Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin took on greater responsibility for the business. During her tenure she faced a series of business crises, including increased competition from the Rouelles manufacturer and a threat to the monopolistic privilege that the Saint-Gobain company had held since the late seventeenth-century. These problems were compounded in the mid-eighteenth century from embezzlement by two company directors as well as general mismanagement at the factories. All of this consumed Geoffrin's attentions until the company regained its stability in the 1760s; only then did she seek out philanthropic

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*Lettres de la marquise du Deffand à Horace Walpole, écrites dans les années 1766 à 1780*, edited by M.A. Thiers (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1864). For unedited versions, see Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, in particular: Horace Walpole, *Letters from London to Madame du Deffand, Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Library: Horace Walpole Collection, 1765-1780); *Recueil de divers ouvrages*, in the hand of Jean-François Wiart (New Haven: Yale University Library: Lewis Walpole Collection, 1755-1780).

activities and leisure, most notably setting off on a long trip to Poland.<sup>120</sup>

### **The nights of Vichy du Deffand**

At the height of *le pot royal* party in May 1779, thirty people gathered in Marie Vichy du Deffand's home on the

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<sup>120</sup> The private papers of Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin were recently sold to the Archives Nationales, and I am grateful to Françoise Anjogue, *Section des Archives Privées*, who allowed me to examine these documents in 2003 before they were publicly available. These documents, along with material already in the public domain, make it clear that no such gathering took place. These records were classified in the Archives Privées section as 508 AP, Fonds Estampes-Geoffrin-Valençay. Other documents, including her address book, remain in the private collection of a descendent, the comte de Bruce. I have not had the opportunity to examine those documents, but am grateful to Dena Goodman who has viewed this collection and provided me with a copy of the transcription that she prepared. The Beinecke Collection at Yale University holds unpublished correspondence of James Douglas, Earl of Morton (1745-1807), in the Marie-Louise Osborne Collection, which includes correspondence with Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin. In addition to these archival materials, some of Geoffrin's correspondence has been published, including Ferdinando Galiani, *Correspondance avec Madame d'Epinay, Madame Necker, Madame Geoffrin, etc.*, edited by L. Perey et G. Maugras (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1881); Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, 'Correspondance de Madame Geoffrin et de Wenzel Anton Kaunitz', edited by M. Lenderova, *Dix-huitième siècle*, 1998: 30: 310-316; Marie Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, *Correspondance inédite du roi Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et de Madame Geoffrin (1764-1777)*, edited by C. de Mouy (Paris, 1875). Details about the Geoffrin business may be found in A. Cochin, *La Manufacture des glaces de Saint-Gobain de 1665 à 1865* (Paris, 1865).

grounds of the Saint-Joseph convent, adjacent to the Hôtel Brienne and the Hôtel de Noailles de Mouchy. Crowded into her third-floor apartment, on the rue Saint Dominique of the Saint-Germain quarter, the *piquet* and *écarte* players sat down at the large gambling tables in her dining room. They spent hours in that big red room with its marble fireplace and its immense windows, seated at tables covered with green cloth. On that particular night, the party was larger than usual, and her household staff had set up extra tables in her adjacent yellow bedroom to accommodate the *loto* and *trictrac* players. The crowd was loud and boisterous, as was often the case – Vichy du Deffand's neighbour had previously complained about the noise.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Vichy du Deffand invited Stéphanie Felicité du Crest, later la comtesse de Genlis de Sainte-Aubin, to come to her house to gamble. Vichy du Deffand noted that she displayed no interest in *la société* and that du Crest replied that she went to bed by 10 pm. Vichy du Deffand also recorded that du Crest complained about the noise in the Saint Dominique apartment building and was pleased when du Crest later moved to the Palais Royal neighbourhood with her mother. In Vichy du Deffand's apartment, her use of a dining room, or *salle à manger*, as her primary room of sociability was highly fashionable. Vichy du Deffand's apartment did not include a *salon* room despite numerous claims to the contrary. See Minutier Central de Notaires de Paris, VII, Rés 448 Inventory after death of Marie Vichy du Deffand, October 16, 1780 and November 30, 1780. *Salles à manger* were added to many Parisian *hôtels* in the eighteenth century. For example, the Matignon family, a neighbour of Vichy du Deffand, renovated their house in the 1740s to add five dining rooms to their main house, as well as built a garden pavilion centred around a single *salle à manger*. For similar renovations at the Hôtel Crozat at the Place Vendôme, see Rochelle Ziskin, *The Place*



This night, however, their host was not her usual self. Even though she had taken extra rest the previous two days to be able to stay up that night, she was nonetheless exhausted. About midway through the party, Vichy du Deffand left the table, went to lie down, and asked Jean-François Wiart, her trusted secretary, to bring victuals. For the rest of that evening, she remained in bed and played her hand from afar, with Wiart's assistance. At 82 years old, Vichy du Deffand was beginning to slow down, and her vibrant and animated life was coming to an end.

The next morning, Wiart woke up in his attic room, a simple space furnished with a large bed, a desk, and two chairs. It was a room that he shared with his wife, *une femme de chambre* in the household who assisted Vichy du Deffand, and their young child. He descended as usual, down three flights to Vichy du Deffand's quarters. At her desk, Wiart retrieved Vichy du Deffand's journal and set out to record her previous night's winnings, adding it to the daily ledger that they kept. While it did not cover the evening's expenses, he knew that Vichy du Deffand

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*Vendôme: Architecture and Social Mobility in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 53-58. At the Hôtel Grimod de la Reynière at the Place Louis XV, built in the 1770s, the family had two dining rooms, one of which later became the notorious stage for a funereal dinner party hosted by their son. Vigée Le Brun added one to her family *hôtel*, a room that became celebrated for her interest in recreating Greek dinner parties. An exceptional *salle à manger*, commented upon at the time, was found at the Hôtel Botterel-Quintin.

would be pleased that she had defrayed her costs. Being on a fixed income of royal allowance and family inheritance, all gambling wins were a welcome contribution.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Vichy du Deffand recorded an annual fixed income of 39,000 livres, which came from multiple sources including la duchesse de Choiseul, madame de Luynes, part of her dowry, her lands in Languedoc, and the queen. At the separation from her husband, she also received a single payment of 50,000 livres (also part of her dowry). To place Vichy du Deffand's income in context, see Archives Nationales, Série O, *Maison du roi*, O/1/666, Pensions de la Maison du roi: correspondance, bons du roi, brevets, états de pension sur la cassette du roi et sur les bâtiments, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles; Dossiers alphabétiques de pensions sur le Trésor royal, fin XVIIIe siècle; O/1/666 to 688, Etat des pensions de la liste civile. For a discussion of the status of unmarried women in this era, see Julie Hardwick, *The Practice of Patriarchy: Gender and the Politics of Household Authority in Early Modern France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998); 'Seeking Separations: Gender, Marriages, and Household Economies in Early Modern France' *French Historical Studies* 21:1 (Winter 1998): 157-180. On the subject of eighteenth-century gambling, see John Dunkley, *Gambling: A Social and Moral Problem in France: 1685-1792* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 1985); Francis Freundlich, *Le Monde de jeu à Paris, 1715-1800* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1995); Thomas M. Kavanagh, *Enlightenment and the Shadows of Chance: The Novel and the Culture of Gambling in Eighteenth-Century France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); 'The Libertine's Bluff: Cards and Culture in Eighteenth-Century France,' *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33 (2000): 505-521. Popular games included *brélan*, *papillon*, and *piquet*. It was also possible to play at the ten authorised *maisons de jeux* in the capital, but *jeux de hazard* such as *loto*, were not allowed as they were deemed to be too driven by chance; legality required that gambler's skills affected the outcome. This did not stop people from playing illegally *jeux de hazard* in private homes, such as Vichy du Deffand, as well as ambassadors' houses where extraterritoriality laws provided freedom from these city regulations.

While she complained frequently about the costs of a Parisian life, one in which she claimed to spend nearly half of her income just on hosting *soupers*, she adored the gaming that came along with these evenings. So much pleasure did it bring, she claimed to endure otherwise horrible company if her winnings were high. Wiart knew that she had once tried to give up gambling, thinking that her luck had run out. It was winter 1767, and she admitted to her aide that her gambling habits were consuming her. Calling it a ‘madness,’ Vichy du Deffand vowed to quit. She did stay away from the tables, but for just three weeks, only to become even more involved upon her return (often staying up much of the night). Even during the last years of her life, she gambled almost daily.<sup>123</sup>

Wiart was responsible for being by her side on these evenings, as well as many tasks in the Vichy du Deffand household. It is through his recordings that much of her life is revealed. Each morning, for example, Wiart was responsible for inspecting the apartment and assigning the work to be done for that day. It had been his routine since Vichy du Deffand hired him, the year after she had moved into the Saint Dominique apartment from a smaller apartment on the rue Beaune. He walked through Vichy

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<sup>123</sup> See Vichy du Deffand, in the hand of Jean-François Wiart, to John Crauford, February 13, 1767, at Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*. On October 9, 1771, Vichy du Deffand described staying up late as a common occurrence, even as late as six in the morning. Two days later, she wrote with approval of Robert Spencer’s refusal to eat at her house, focusing only on their game of *trictrac*.



du Deffand's main rooms, *la bibliothèque, la chambre à coucher*, and *la salle à manger*, through some of the smaller rooms such as the *vestibules, l'antichambre, le petit cabinet, le cabinet de toilette*, and *la petite garde-robe*. He reviewed the service area (five rooms for food storage and preparation: *les caves, la cuisine, l'office, le garde-meuble*, and *le grenier*). He also checked on her two cats and her dog, Tonton, a black spaniel that Vichy du Deffand adored, but which some visitors feared for his bite and disliked for his habit of urinating indoors.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Detailed inventories and descriptions of this physical environment may be found at Archives Nationales, Série H, *Administration Locales et Comptabilités Diverses*, H/5/4121\* and 4122\*, Filles de Saint-Joseph, dites de la Providence, rue Saint-Dominique Recettes, 1719-1792; H/5/4122\*, Recettes des loyers, Filles de Saint-Joseph, 1776-1792; H/5/4213, Rentes, quittances d'ouvriers et de fournisseurs Filles de Saint-Joseph XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles; Archives Nationales, Série S, *Bien des Etablissements Religieux Supprimés*, S/V, Congrégations religieuses de femmes à Paris; S/4734-4737, Filles de Saint-Joseph, ou de la Providence, rue Saint-Dominique. To place the inventories in context and for discussion of the limitations of these sources, see Philip T. Hoffman, Gilles Postel-Vinay, and Jean-Laurent Rosenthal, *Priceless Markets: The Political Economy of Credit in Paris, 1660-1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Jean Laffont, *Notaires, notariat et société sous l'Ancien Régime: actes du colloque de Toulouse, 15 et 16 décembre 1989*, Université des Sciences Sociales de Toulouse, Centre d'Histoire Contemporaine des Institutions (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1990); Marie-Françoise Limon, *Les Notaires au Châtelet de Paris sous le règne de Louis XIV* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1992); Jean-Paul Poisson, *Notaires et société: travaux d'histoire et de sociologie notariales* (Paris: Economica, 1996). Notaries were required by law to keep copies of all legal documents,

Wuart was responsible for the *marchands* who delivered goods (in a typical year, more than forty different vendors visited the apartment) and managing the household staff employed by Vichy du Deffand, thirteen in addition to himself. They included: four assigned to her kitchen (Saint-Jean, Ramillon, Catherine, Deschamps), three who took care of her dressing and grooming (madame Wuart, mademoiselle Couty, mademoiselle Tourette), four footmen (Domer, Caumont, Collemant, Firmin), one coachman (Decla), and one live-out assistant, Nicolas-Antoine Pétry, who occasionally substituted for Wuart as a scribe and reader for Vichy du Deffand.<sup>125</sup>

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which then had to be passed down to their successors. In 1751 alone, approximately 59,000 documents were drawn up for 137,000 people.<sup>125</sup> Of the twenty-four rooms in her apartment, eight were used for housing staff. For contemporary discussions of servants' duties, see Anonymous, *Cuisine et office de santé* (Paris: Le Clerc, 1758); M. Audiger, *La Maison réglée et l'art de diriger la maison d'un grand seigneur et autres ... avec la véritable méthode de faire toutes sortes d'essences, d'eaux et de liqueurs* (Paris: N. Le Gras, A. Besongne et H. Foucault, 1692). For studies on the lives and roles of domestic staff in this era, see Cissie C. Fairchild, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984); Jeffry Kaplow, *The Names of Kings: The Parisian Laboring Poor in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1972); Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983). Others have explored the types and meaning of work in eighteenth-century France, including Steven Laurence Kaplan and Cynthia J. Koepp, editors, *Work in France: Representations, Meaning, Organization, and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Michael Sonenscher, *Work and Wages: Natural Law, Politics and*



After delegating the morning's assignments, Wiart was ready for his most important task – being available when Vichy du Deffand awoke. The loss of her sight in the early 1750s had turned many everyday functions into assisted efforts. This, combined with her irregular sleeping habits, necessitated nearly round-the-clock care. Having served as the eyes of Vichy du Deffand nearly every day for more than thirty years, Wiart read aloud the day's letters and journals, computed her astrological trackings, and then received her dictation while she passed hour after hour in her beloved chair, the *tonneau*. He tracked down her favourite novels, including the older, classic literature that Vichy du Deffand preferred.<sup>126</sup>

Wiart typically assisted Vichy du Deffand on her outings. For most of her life, up until her seventies, she attended gatherings all over town with occasional excursions beyond the city limits to such places as Meudon and Compiègne. Her correspondence, of which more than 1,500 letters are extant, provides extensive descriptions of her social rounds. In one letter, Vichy du Deffand described a *souper* at the Ussé residence where she found a 'full court' of her closest friends: 'madame de Maurepas, madame de la Vallière, madame de Brancas, le reste,

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*Eighteenth-Century French Trades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>126</sup> See Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Vichy du Deffand papers for letters, journal, and astrological computations in the hand of Wiart; see Vichy du Deffand to Selwyn on December 3, 1774 for her description of her *tonneau* as her favourite place to be.



l'abbé de Sade, la Boissière, l'évêque de Saint-Brieux, l'entendait de Revines, M. de Menou.' In another, she described a mediocre *souper* at the Maurepas' house with the Pierrots, Aumonts, Ponts de Veyles, and Argensons, claiming she spent more time looking out at the gardens than paying attention to her dinner companions. Vichy du Deffand was far happier spending a night at the Jonzacs, from which she walked away with large winnings at the *cavagnole* table.<sup>127</sup>

In addition to regular parties and visits, her frequent correspondence with more than sixty friends, relatives, and acquaintances kept her occupied and connected to a larger community. From these letters, we learn that she was born in 1696 as Marie de Vichy, related to the prominent Choiseul and Luynes families by marriage. She was raised in the town of Drôme, in the Bourgogne countryside, until her parents sent her to a Parisian convent to further her education. This was the beginning of a rocky period during which her parents became concerned by her anti-Catholic spirit and sought out religious guidance to correct her path. At age 22, she married her second cousin, Deffand de la Lande, marquis de Chastres, a member of the upper nobility; after just three years, they were legally separated. Soon after, friends

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<sup>127</sup> See Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Vichy du Deffand papers for extensive descriptions of *soupers*; for details on her *cavagnole* habits, see April 2, 1771 and September 10, 1771. For description of Argenson *souper*, see June 10, 1742, approximately a decade before she began losing her vision.

described romantic interest from the Regent and président Hénault, as well as her later unrequited love for Horace Walpole, but she lived without a male companion for the rest of her life.<sup>128</sup>

One also learns of her great attention to the apartment on the rue Saint Dominique, where she lived for more than thirty years. She described her neighbours, including her view of the Saint-Joseph chapel, where she watched the sisters dutifully heading to chapel, a devotion she said she never could understand. Her writings illustrate her decision to incorporate a few of the novel rooms of sociability, most notably her large *salle*

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<sup>128</sup> Vichy and her husband were second cousins through their grandparents; Vichy's maternal grandfather and Deffand's maternal grandmother were siblings. See François-Alexandre Aubert de La Chesnay des Bois, *Dictionnaire de la Noblesse* (Paris, 1863-1876). Regarding Walpole's first visit to Vichy du Deffand in October 1765, he found the place to be dreary. After one dinner, he described it as a sorry sight when deaf old Hénault had come for a meal and the blind old Vichy du Deffand yelled at him with a description of each course. He said only those who could not get invitations to other houses would turn up for the blind lady's suppers. He later changed his mind and decided that the house was one of the most fun places in Paris. Vichy du Deffand developed a strong affection for Walpole, even attempting to persuade him to move into an available apartment in her building. The extant correspondence between Horace Walpole and Vichy du Deffand is extensive. See Horace Walpole, *Correspondence*, edited by W.S. Lewis and A. Dayle Wallace (London, 1937-1983); *Correspondence of Horace Walpole* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955); *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame du Deffand and Wiart*, edited by W.S. Lewis and Warren Hunting Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939); *Letters*, edited by Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904).

*à manger* as her primary form of entertaining. In that fashionable room, she welcomed friends for meals and games; indeed her friend Montesquieu praised Vichy du Deffand for her *gourmand* habits. To her sister-in-law, she wrote of her lavish spending on taffeta and upholstery to create a cheerful atmosphere, while to her friend madame de Staal, she described how much she enjoyed her neighbourhood, the high noble quarter of Saint Germain. She compared household notes with the new French ambassador in Constantinople while he was in the process of establishing his residence. They discussed contemporary design options and shared their views on the importance of colours in making visitors feel festive.<sup>129</sup>

Through her letters, one also learns of her tumultuous relationships with family members, how Vichy du Deffand was critical of her younger brother's religious spirit and her older brother's child-rearing practices.<sup>130</sup> During an extended

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<sup>129</sup> Vichy du Deffand took over the apartment's lease from the bishop of Fréjus. Between April 1746 and December 1748, she frequently wrote to friends of her fondness for the new apartment, noting in particular the high quality of her fellow tenants, including the duc de Maine and the comte de Toulouse. Vichy du Deffand signed the first year's lease in 1747 for 800 *livres*, and remained there until her death in 1780, at which time her annual rent was 1,875 *livres*.

<sup>130</sup> See Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Papers, Letters of Vichy du Deffand, 1752-1754. Her correspondence with her cousins, the Choiseuls, was far more affectionate, though occasionally displayed some anxiety, most likely due to the considerable financial support she received from la duchesse de Choiseul. Some of these letters were published in edited form in *Correspondance complète de madame du*



visit to the family's château in Drôme, she became concerned that her brother was expecting her niece, Julie de Lespinasse, (the illegitimate daughter of her brother's affair and a woman later described as a *salonnière* herself), to raise the other children of the household. After a lengthy correspondence between the two siblings, Vichy du Deffand convinced her brother to send Julie de Lespinasse to the rue Saint Dominique where Vichy du Deffand promised to care for her.<sup>131</sup>

While Lespinasse later described the move to be an improvement, she again found herself in a subservient situation, catering to Vichy du Deffand's needs and wishes. Vichy du Deffand expected her to be available to substitute for Wiart as reader, scribe, and companion, whenever she demanded it, even in the middle of the night. While Lespinasse expressed great sympathy for her aunt's situation in their early years together (particularly for her blindness), even helping to regulate her diet, she became increasingly impatient with the expectations, even requirements, of residing in the Vichy du Deffand household. After ten years, Lespinasse had established her own support

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*Deffand avec la duchesse de Choiseul, l'abbé Barthélemy et monsieur Craufort* edited by Sainte-Aulaire (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1866).

<sup>131</sup> As discussed in Section 1, Julie de Lespinasse was transformed into a *salon* organiser in the nineteenth-century mythology.

system in Paris, enough so that she was able to find other, more appealing accommodations.<sup>132</sup>

Once settled into her own apartment, a small place also located on the rue Saint Dominique, Lespinasse turned her attention to fun-filled days and adventurous evenings. For a few years, she became a regular on the dinner party circuit, describing it as absolutely crucial to developing and maintaining one's status in the capital. Sharing her aunt's forthright style, she shared strong opinions of these parties in letters to friends, noting which houses and companions were dull and tiresome. She even offered one visitor a schedule for how to conquer the city by attending eleven

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<sup>132</sup> On July 4, 1761, Julie de Lespinasse described how she helped Vichy du Deffand to cut her intake of brioche and cake so that her digestion would be improved. For her later frustrations, see her correspondence with Jacques Guibert previously cited. These letters also describe her great passion for him, with such phrases as 'I want to love you with all of my heart and to place in you a confidence without reserve', on May 13, 1773. For further discussion of her life, see Janine Bouissounouse, *Julie: The Life of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse: Her Salon, Her Friends, Her Loves*, translated by Pierre de Fontnouvelle (New York: Appleton-Century-Crafts, 1962); Arnaud de Maurepas, *Les Français vus par eux-mêmes: le XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Robert Laffant, 1996). For descriptions of her new accommodations, see Minutier Central de Notaires de Paris, LXXXIII, Rés 542 Will and Inventory after death of Julie-Eléonore de Lespinasse, May 22, 1776; Rés 543 Succession of Julie-Eléonore Lespinasse, May 31, 1776. These documents also describe financial support for Lespinasse from her mother and the duc d'Orléans. Unlike the household inventory of Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin, the contents of a *salon* room were described in Lespinasse's new apartment, a room that was outfitted for her daily *toilette* with a small table, one chair, a mirror, and powder bowl.

dinner parties in six days' time. However, by the early 1770s, her mood had changed considerably, and she expressed feelings of deep unhappiness from neither meeting the city's social expectations nor being able to keep up with her peers. Writing to the marquis de Mora, the son of the Spanish ambassador whom she had met in 1766, she described her great loneliness among the crowds. To the colonel de Guibert, she complained of the nasty things people said in the Parisian *soupers*, characterising the culture as marked by intense social competition. She believed that these interactions were obligatory, however much she ultimately came to loathe it, writing 'Bless Heaven for letting me retire from the *monde*: that which reaches me makes me feel disgusted.'<sup>133</sup>

Despondent and despairing in the 1770s, she recorded her increasing use of opium to numb her emotions and to cope with her daily life. Her relations with Vichy du Deffand remained strained; the elder woman had been upset when Lespinasse chose to leave her aunt's household (a move that some

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<sup>133</sup> See *Letters of Julie de Lespinasse*, translated by Katherine P. Wormley (Boston: Hardy, Pratt and Co., 1903); Julie de Lespinasse, *Correspondance entre mademoiselle de Lespinasse et le comte de Guibert, publiée pour la première fois d'après le texte original* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1906). Further information about Julie de Lespinasse may be found in Jacques Guibert, *Voyages de Guibert dans diverses parties de la France et en Suisse faits en 1775, 1778, 1784, 1785* (Paris: D'Hautel, 1806); Marie Vichy du Defand, *Letters to and From Madame du Deffand and Julie de Lespinasse*, edited by Warren Hunting Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938). Both La Harpe and Guibert prepared eulogies to Lespinasse, which were later published in La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire*, 6 volumes (Paris, 1801): I.



historians have attributed to Lespinasse's decision to 'open a *salon*'). They had not reconciled by the time of Lespinasse's death in 1776, at the age of thirty-four, a premature passing that friends latter attributed to an overdose of opium.<sup>134</sup>

Vichy du Deffand's letters also shed light on her political beliefs (her own writings directly contradict the dominant representation of a liberal with reformist, even revolutionary, impulses).<sup>135</sup> Vichy du Deffand was a noblewoman who benefited directly from the strict hierarchy of courtly life and felt she had nothing to gain from political, economic, and social reform movements. Quite the opposite, she feared that the monarchy had been weakening in her lifetime and that any further loss of royal power would further erode her position. Dependent on the stability of court society for her livelihood – most of her income came in

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<sup>134</sup> See La Harpe (1801): I: 384-385 for his claim that Lespinasse took sixty grains of opium to kill herself. For Lespinasse's description of her opium habits, see Julie de Lespinasse, *Letters of Julie de Lespinasse*, translated by Katherine P. Wormley (Boston: Hardy, Pratt and Co., 1903): 9, 34-35, 75. According to Bruno Kisch, *Scales and Weights, An Historial Outline* (New Haven and London, 1965), opium was commonly sold in the eighteenth century. See also Nicolas Leméry, *Dictionnaire ou Traité universel des drogues simples* (Rotterdam, 1727): 393, which describes a typical dosage of half a grain to two grains (that Lespinasse claimed to have well exceeded). See also *Nouveau dictionnaire universel et raisonné de médecine de chirurgie et de l'art vétérinaire* (Paris, 1772): 5: 64-67 for discussion of opium's calming effect.

<sup>135</sup> For a recent example of this portrayal, see Benedetta Craveri, *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, translated by Teresa Waugh (Boston: D.R. Godine, 1994).

the form of allowances from the queen and a few high-ranking cousins – she was a true believer in royal values, including the importance of stable (even fixed) social positions. While she closely followed the American revolutionaries' actions against the British crown, for example, asking Horace Walpole for updates on events and showing keen interest in the Americans in Paris, she did not support or approve of their efforts. Vichy du Deffand sought to understand their movement and its symbols – for example, asking if the hat that Benjamin Franklin habitually wore in Paris was a symbol of liberty – but remained unsympathetic to their insurgency. She described the unfolding events as appalling, a sequence that she feared would undermine the natural order of society.<sup>136</sup>

In her exchanges with international friends, she displayed great curiosity, asking about their lives and environments. To Carl Frederik Scheffer, she inquired about his home country of Sweden, explaining that she did not think she would ever have the chance to visit and therefore asked for descriptions so that she could imagine his surroundings. With

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<sup>136</sup> See Vichy du Deffand's letters to George Augustus Selwyn in *George Augustus Selwyn and France: Unpublished Correspondence* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1990): especially between September 10, 1765 and November 6, 1768 as well as January 2, 1779 and April 2, 1780; and *Letters of the Marquise du Deffand to the Honorable Horace Walpole, Afterwards Earl of Orford, from the Year 1766 to the Year 1780* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1810): especially between January 1776 and October 1778.



George Selwyn, she requested regular updates on everyday life in London and how it differed from his experiences in Paris. She also demonstrated a generous spirit with her international correspondents – such as Ambassadeur Caracciolo (Italy) and Johan Bernstorff (Denmark) – offering to make introductions upon their arrivals in Paris, informing them of ‘open houses’, and providing them with information about the city’s happenings. For Horace Walpole, she ordered china decorated with strawberries for his English home, Strawberry Hill; she also helped him to purchase an armoire and a chair. With her Parisian friends, she exchanged snuffboxes, wine, chocolate, and Hyson and Pickering tea she imported via London.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Vichy du Deffand’s generosity extended to many individuals, including Madame Aulan, abbé de Barthélemy, prince de Beauvau, Johan Bernstorff, Lord Bath (who was particularly grateful for being included in her *aimables soupers*), chevalier de Boufflers, ambassador Caracciolo, monsieur and madame Châtelet, Conway (who worried about the dress code of her *salle à manger* upon his first visit and remained in Vichy du Deffand’s vestibule despite prodding, as he described in his letter to her of November 1, 1753), madame Forcalquier, président Hénault, président Lambert, madame de Luxembourg, Montesquieu, les Pembrokes, and count Scheffer. Her friend, George Selwyn, arranged for the delivery of Hyson tea (a green tea from China, made from hyssop plants) and for additional leaves for madame de Mireboix at the request of Vichy du Deffand. On others’ *maisons ouvertes*, or open houses, see Vichy du Deffand to Walpole, August 31, 1777. See Horace Walpole, *A Description of the Villa* (Strawberry Hill: Thomas Kirgate, 1774) for a description of the strawberry china. See Vichy du Deffand to George Selwyn, June 29, 1766, and March 13, 1768; she also later returned the



This generosity and attention to her friends was also visible in the preparation of her will, a document exceptionally detailed in her bequests to family members and friends. Beyond the usual cash disbursements (she left a large sum to her nephew, the marquis d'Aulan), she arranged for the distribution of specific gifts. She bequeathed a diamond to her friend, mademoiselle Sandon; family porcelain to her younger brother; books to the prince de Beauvau; crystal to the maréchale de Luxembourg; a tea table and vases to the vicomtesse de Cambis; and gold snuffboxes to la duchesse de Choiseul, mademoiselle Conty, and monsieur Mouchart. To Walpole, she left a miniature portrait of herself, a gold snuffbox of Tonton, as well as custody of this dog. He viewed the latter as more penalty than gift, later complaining that the spaniel destroyed the rugs in his home, but noting that he would try to have some 'dogmanity'.<sup>138</sup>

At her death, a few friends requested the return of their correspondence to Vichy du Deffand, as was then the custom. Selwyn specifically asked for the destruction of his thirty-six letters, but they were preserved. With the exception of two known instances – the duc de Choiseul and abbé Barthélemy – their calls were not honoured. Wiart sent eighteen boxes of Vichy du

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favour when ships from the Indies with *grandes richesses*, see August 21, 1778.

<sup>138</sup> Minutier Central de Notaires de Paris, VII, 439 Will of Marie Vichy du Deffand; Minutier Central de Notaires de Paris, VII, 445 Will of Marie Vichy du Deffand (addendum). See Walpole to Mason, May 22, 1781 for his efforts with Tonton.

Deffand's correspondence to Horace Walpole who then stored them at his Strawberry Hill villa. Walpole later wrote that he believed his friend had entrusted him with her letters and writings so that he could keep them intact as a single collection. His decision to carry out those wishes created an unusually large trove of documents from that era, and have also provided the basis for this revised picture of the life of Vichy du Deffand, long overlooked by historians of eighteenth-century France.<sup>139</sup>

### **The business and commercial life of Geoffrin**

In 1749, Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin inherited her husband's stake in the Saint-Gobain manufactory, giving her lead ownership in one of Europe's largest companies. In this new position, Geoffrin took on exceptional responsibility and prominence. This was a business that François Geoffrin had co-managed for more than forty years, during a period when sales quadrupled and prices increased by sixteen-fold. Enjoying a royal privilege to produce and sell the '*noble*' material of mirror and

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<sup>139</sup> See Horace Walpole, *A Description of the Villa* (Strawberry Hill: Thomas Kirgate, 1774); Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Objects, Portrait of Vichy du Deffand by Carmontelle. According to Walpole's biographer, W.S. Lewis, in Walpole's *Correspondence*, edited by W.S. Lewis and A. Dayle Wallace (London: 1937-1983), eleven letters were copied by the police when they were at the Post Office, and today are kept in the archival collection of the Affaires Etrangères in Paris.

glass, Saint-Gobain held a working capital of fourteen million *livres* with annual sales ranging between two and three million *livres*. Clients comprised a roster of affluent French and European individuals, drawn from royal, aristocratic, and bourgeois families as well as government, academic, and civic institutions. This demand kept twelve hundred people employed at Saint-Gobain, both in the Saint-Antoine quarter of Paris and in a large factory in the woods of Normandy. Employees carried out labour-intensive work, such as chopping wood and fueling furnaces round-the-clock. Some were responsible for the skilled and delicate work, including keeping precise controls of temperature and movement during the complicated production process; others were charged with refining the company's techniques so that demand could be fulfilled for mirrors cast in larger quantities and with greater scale.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Archives Nationales, Série AP, *Les fonds des grandes familles*, AP/508/34, for the contrat de mariage de Louis Geoffrin et Marie-Thérèse Rodet, enfant mineure, 14 juillet 1713. For analyses and data on this business, see Archives Nationales, Série O, *Maison du roi*, O/1/1990 to 1992A, Glaces: correspondance, mémoires, états de livraisons, comptes, relevés, inventaires des manufactures des glaces, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles; Jean-Pierre Daviet, *Une Multinationale à la française: histoire de Saint-Gobain, 1665-1989* (Paris: Fayard, 1989); Elphège Frémy, *Histoire de la manufacture royal des glaces de France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1909); Claude Pris, 'The Memoirs of Delaunay Deslandes,' *Technology and Culture* 17:2 (April 1976): 210-216; *Une Grande entreprise française sous l'Ancien Régime: la manufacture royale des glaces de Saint-Gobain 1665-1830* (Université de Paris thesis, 1973) published by Université de Lille (1975); Warren C.



After her husband's death, Geoffrin began working closely with Wéléat, the family's representative at the company, devoted to the continued success of the business. Soon after the transfer in ownership, however, Geoffrin and Wéléat confronted a series of management difficulties, which led to their decision to dismiss three lead managers in rapid succession (Delahaye in 1752, Romilly in 1755, and Dantic in 1758). In their view, Delahaye had a problem of absenteeism, frequently hunting rather than overseeing the factory; they accused him of regularly bringing large numbers of workers on these excursions. They charged Romilly with embezzling money and materials from the firm, while they deemed Dantic incompetent, providing little supervision of the employees and repeatedly falling short of the quotas they expected of the factory.<sup>141</sup>

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Scoville, *Capitalism and French Glassmaking, 1640-1789* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1950); 'State Policy and the French Glass Industry, 1640-1789,' *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 56:3 (May 1942): 430-455; 'Labor and Labor Conditions in the French Glass Industry, 1643-1789,' *Journal of Modern History* 15:4 (December 1943): 275-294; 'Large-Scale Production in the French Plate-Glass Industry, 1665-1789,' *Journal of Political Economy* 50:5 (October 1942): 669-698. This work draws on Archives de la Compagnie de Saint Gobain, *Organisation de Saint-Gobain; Série F, Versements des Ministères et des Administrations*, F12, 1489.

<sup>141</sup> For further details about mirror manufactory, see Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, editors, *Recueil de planches sur les sciences, les arts libéraux et les arts mécaniques, avec leur explication* (Paris, 1765, 1772): IV, X; *Recueil de planches de l'Encyclopédie par ordre matières* (Paris: Panckoucke, 1784, 1787, 1789): III, V, VII; 'Glacerie, ou l'art de fabriquer les glaces' and 'Art de la verrerie' in *Encyclopédie*

Throughout the 1750s, Geoffrin was consumed with repairing the damage from these upheavals and seeking to reverse the downward spiral in the family's revenues. In 1758, Geoffrin and Wéléat turned to a company insider, Pierre Delaunay Deslandes, who they had first hired in 1752 as controller. They promoted Deslandes to director and manager and gave him responsibility for returning the firm to secure footing. Fortunately for Geoffrin, he achieved great success, returning Saint-Gobain to profitability in a few cycles and then maintaining steady returns for the duration of his leadership. Among other things, Deslandes defended the family's royal privilege from significant encroachments in the early 1760s and oversaw the development of new casting techniques in the late 1760s. In the 1770s, Deslandes' achievements on behalf of the Geoffrin business even led to his ennoblement in the Order of Saint Michel.<sup>142</sup>

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*méthodique: arts et métiers mécaniques* (Paris: Panckoucke, 1784, 1791); Bosc d'Antic, *Oeuvres, contenant plusieurs mémoires sur l'art de la verrerie* (Paris, 1780); Antonio de Neri, Christopher Merret, and Johann Kunckel, *Art de la verrerie* (Paris: Durand and Pissot, 1752); Archives Nationales, Série F, *Versements des Ministères et des Administrations*, F12, 1486, 1487, 1488A, 1489B, 1490. At the time, the Royal Academy of Science was also seeking ways to improve the French glass-making industry. On a different note, for an unusual glimpse into the life of a *vitrier*, see *Journal de ma vie: Jacques-Louis Ménétra, compagnon vitrier au XVIIIe siècle*, edited by Daniel Roche (Paris: A. Michel, 1998).

<sup>142</sup> See Deslandes' *Essai historique sur la fabrication des glaces* and his memoirs (previously cited).



These successes brought considerable wealth to Geoffrin in the 1760s and 1770s. With her increased financial security, and the greater stability in the family business, Geoffrin began to spend some time away from her Saint-Gobain affairs. In her new-found leisure time, she embarked on an extended tour of Poland, accepting the invitation of Stanislas Poniatowski, later king of Poland. She enjoyed the dinner party circuit and reciprocated with friends, acquaintances, and associates at *dîners* and *soupers* in her home in the Saint Honoré quarter, located not far from the Palais Louvre. She corresponded with friends such as Lady Morton in Scotland; to her she described her daily life, such as seeing Voltaire's tragedy *Semiramis* in which she noted that 400 tickets had to be given away. She also sought out visitors to Paris, including the Milanese political philosopher Cesare, marquis de Beccaria, and diplomats Ferdinando Galiani and Charles-Henri de Gleichen.<sup>143</sup>

Some of these visitors recorded their impressions, including Beccaria who expressed great appreciation for the invitations. Like many travellers to new places, he welcomed the

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<sup>143</sup> See Archives Nationales, Archives Privées section, 508, Fonds Estampes-Geoffrin-Valençay, 37, Correspondance active, *Lettres de Madame Geoffrin à Stanislas Poniatowski, roi de Pologne, 1764-1777*; *Lettres autographes de madame Geoffrin*; *Lettre d monsieur de la Genetière*; Correspondance passive, *Lettres de Stanislas Poniatowski, roi de Pologne, 1764-1777*. For Lady Morton's private papers, see Yale University, Beinecke Library, *The Douglas James, 14<sup>th</sup> Earl of Morton Collection*, and the letter dated September 12, 1748, for the *Semiramis* comment.



opportunity to make new friends and to enjoy his temporary home. Registering just one complaint, Beccaria noted that his fellow countryman Galiani, an acquaintance he did not enjoy, was usually invited to supper on the same dates. While he conceded his wit, Beccaria complained that the Neapolitan usually dominated the conversation and rarely paused to listen to other guests. Galiani did not record grumblings about the Milanese marquis, but rather wrote of great affection for the meals that he enjoyed in the homes of Geoffrin and others, writing there are no dinner parties in Naples like the ones he had experienced in Paris. Gleichen was far less complimentary, viewing Geoffrin's invitations with suspicion. He doubted that Geoffrin's *soupers* were truly acts of hospitality, but cynically believed that such gatherings were simply events to promote her family's business, taking place in rooms that were decorated with the family's wares.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Archives Privées section, 508, Fonds Estampes-Geoffrin-Valençay. Within this category of classification, the documents are divided into five separate call numbers, 508 AP 34: Papiers de Madame Geoffrin; 508 AP 35: Papiers divers de Madame de la Ferté-Imbault; 508 AP 36: Comptes et papiers de famille; 508 AP 37: Correspondance de Madame de la Ferté-Imbault; 508 AP 38: Papiers personnels de Madame de la Ferté-Imbault. In addition to these archival materials, some of Geoffrin's correspondence has been published, including Ferdinando Galiani, *Correspondance avec madame d'Epinay, madame Necker, Madame Geoffrin, etc.*, edited by Lucien Perey and Gaston Maugras (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1881); Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, 'Correspondance de madame Geoffrin et de Wenzel Anton Kaunitz,' edited by M. Lenderova, *Dix-huitième siècle* 30 (1998): 310-316; *Correspondance inédite du roi Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et de madame Geoffrin*

In later years, Geoffrin also became interested in artistic aspects of the capital. She sought out Hubert Robert's skills as a portraitist, ordering pictures of herself, including a series in her garden, two showing Geoffrin in her *chambre* (one in which she is drinking hot chocolate while her servant reads from a gazette), and one portraying her at the desk in her *cabinet*, poring over paperwork.<sup>145</sup> She also collected the work of a few contemporary artists, notably Jean-Baptiste Oudry (renowned for hunting scenes and still-lives and who also served as director of the Gobelins manufactory) and Claude-Joseph Vernet (celebrated for his maritime paintings). She assisted international friends, such as Lady Morton and Lord Shelburne, in their own searches to purchase French paintings at favourable prices.<sup>146</sup>

Perhaps most significantly, charity became a great passion of Geoffrin when she reached her sixties and seventies. In particular, she supported Parisian writers during their times of need, including providing housing for Marmontel and furniture for

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(1764-1777), edited by C. de Mouy (Paris, 1875). See Carl-Heinrich von Gleichen, *Souvenirs de Charles-Henri Baron de Gleichen, précédés d'une notice*, translated by P. Grimblot (Paris: Techener 1868): 99 for his speculation.

<sup>145</sup> In eighteenth-century Paris, *cabinets* were novel and fashionable rooms, promoted by an emerging group of professional architects. See Section 4, 'Creating the *salon* rooms: material culture and cosmopolitan sociability' for further details.

<sup>146</sup> See Minutier Central de Notaires de Paris, CXVII, 886 and Rés 539 Inventory after death of Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, 1777 for descriptions of her art collections. See Geoffrin's correspondence, previously cited, for her exchanges with Morton and Shelburne.

d'Alembert. Such decisions caused greater worry in her daughter, who later wrote of her considerable frustration with her mother's change in spending habits toward the end of her life. In preparing her will, Geoffrin was at her most generous, leaving considerable sums to her domestic staff, including 3,000 *livres* for Louis Crouet, dit Neuilly, her *valet de chambre*; 2500 *livres* for Henri Damesme, her first cook; and between 1,000 and 2,000 *livres* for her eight other servants: Joachim Huré, *garçon de cuisine*, Bonaventure Follet, *portier*, Marie-Anne Menessier, *femme de chambre*, Thérèse Sezile, *seconde femme de chambre*, Alexis Seigné dit Nanteuil, *premier domestique*, Laurent Jeanson, dit Valentin, *second domestique*, François Aubin, *troisième domestique* et Pierre Miocque, *cocher*. In addition to the financial gifts, her domestic staff inherited the contents of their rooms. A patron of the arts until the end, she also bequeathed 1, 275 *livres* to André Morellet, a writer who had captured her admiration.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Archives Nationales, Série AP, Les fonds de grands familles, Etat des fonds de la série AP by S. d'Huart and C. Bonazzi in *salle des inventaires*, travée 38; AP/508/34, Manufacture des glaces. Titres de propriété de l'action de Madame Geoffrin; Minutier Central de Notaires de Paris, CXVII, 879 Will of Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, February 8, 1777 and May 25, 1777, prepared by Girandea; CXVII, 886 and Rés 539 Inventory after death of Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, 1777; Girandea was the head of one of 113 notarial offices in Paris, attached to Châtelet, the local court for Paris. Geoffrin died in October 1777 and her household inventory was carried out on October 15 and 17, 1777. The family's notary, Girandea, prepared the detailed document, witnessed by a second notary (Rendu), a receiver general (Boutin), the representative of her daughter (Crotat), and a furniture dealer (Pasquier).



While these gifts were considerable by the day's standards, she left the bulk of the estate to her daughter, Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin (then known by her married name, la marquise de la Ferté-Imbault), an annual income of approximately 130,000 *livres*. Despite this inheritance, Ferté-Imbault remained upset by her mother's final wishes. After she oversaw the disbursements, she ended the Geoffrin family's charity, refusing further requests from Morellet and others. These rejections elicited unfavourable descriptions of Geoffrin's daughter in some later memoirs by d'Alembert and Marmontel. Morellet wrote that he considered Ferté-Imbault impertinent for refusing to receive him altogether. Ending the philanthropy earned no admirers for Ferté-Imbault, but her decision did preserve the family's wealth. When she died in 1788, she bequeathed considerable sums to her family members.<sup>148</sup>

For Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, her generosity had a direct impact on her legacy. D'Alembert, Morellet, and Thomas prepared *éloges* describing her great charity and later

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All ten domestic staff were also present. The document catalogued household furnishings (from the mundane to the exquisite), wardrobes, and family papers. No detail was too small including the colour and designs of bedspreads, dresses, and clocks. Notaries were responsible for preparing legal documents for their clients, including marriage contracts, wills, probates, property sales, rental contracts, loans, and private agreements. The *confrère* Rendu was the second notary; Parisian law dictated that two notaries were required to be present for an *inventaire après décès* to testify to the accuracy of the contract.

<sup>148</sup> See Archives Nationales, Archives Privées section, 508, Fonds Estampes-Geoffrin-Valençay, 36, for the *Etat des revenus de Ferté-Imbault*, 1788.

included favourable passages in their memoirs. D'Alembert wrote of her passion for giving – he believed that as a young child, even at birth, she was only concerned about charity toward others. From her passing, Geoffrin was portrayed in exceptional terms, with d'Alembert describing that it was an 'absolute necessity to her, seemed born with her, and tormented her, if I may say so, even from her earliest years ... while yet a child, if she saw from the window any poor creature asking alms, she would throw whatever she could lay her hands upon to them; her bread, her linen, and even her clothes. She was often scolded for this intemperance of charity, sometimes even punished, but nothing could alter the disposition, she would do the same the very next day'.<sup>149</sup>

### **Discovering and experiencing Chanteloup**

In sum, Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin did not hold *salons* as described by nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers. However, to reiterate, they did enjoy the the Parisian social scene, which included visiting friends, attending theatre, and delighting in meeting new people, especially international visitors. Geoffrin, for example, sought out visitors to Paris, including Cesare, Beccaria, Galiani, and Gleichen. Vichy du Deffand, for example, followed

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<sup>149</sup> See the *éloges* and memoirs of d'Alembert, Morellet, and Thomas, previously cited. For further discussion of these remembrances, see Janet Aldis, *Madame Geoffrin: Her Salon and Her Times, 1750-1777* (London: Methuen & Co., 1905).

some of the new theatrical productions, mostly out of concern that they were abandoning the traditional values of *grand siècle* creations. Both also participated in a rarefied world of *dîners* and *soupers*, abundant meals that took place in sumptuous interiors, prepared by large kitchen staffs under the direction of trained cooks, often with exotic food and high quality wines.

Both women could afford to participate in this type of sociability. In intimate and elegant surroundings, they hosted small groups of friends and acquaintances for informal gatherings. They chose their guests carefully, but not in order to balance conversational talents or political propensities. Rather, they invited people who shared their most material and *mondaine* concerns: Vichy du Deffand wanted guests willing to bet large sums and gamble to all hours; Geoffrin was keen to show off the mirrors of her family business.

While Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin did not hold *salons*, they nonetheless knew the term as a novel and exciting feature of eighteenth-century life: rooms designated for specific activities by expert architects. These innovations had become popular among Parisian elites by the middle of the eighteenth century, although initially presented in the turn-of-the-century architectural treatises by members of the newly formed Academy of Architecture. In *Cours d'Architecture* (1691), Augustin-Charles d'Aviler proposed significant changes in residential designs, calling on his peers to build houses with highly differentiated



spaces. He argued that this change would bring greater comfort and utility to their clients. Specifically, he presented ideal arrangements with detailed descriptions on how each room would best function. D'Aviler recommended an underground floor of *offices*, with several different types of rooms to be used by domestic staff to ensure the smooth functioning of the building, with separate areas for food preparation, food storage, meat storage, beverage storage, spice rooms, wood rooms, washrooms, and tableware. On the ground and first floors, d'Aviler called for several rooms to meet daily needs of owners, outfitted with *salons*, *salles*, and *sallettes* for specific functions, including such spaces as waiting rooms, offices, receiving rooms, eating rooms, company rooms, galleries, and sleeping rooms.<sup>150</sup>

Twenty years later, Jean-Baptiste Leblond republished an expanded *Cours d'Architecture*, giving further detail and amendments to d'Aviler *salons* and *salles* ideas.<sup>151</sup> He added eighteen pages to the discussion of room specification and placement, including further information on such novelties as bathing and gaming rooms, and considerable attention to rooms where food was prepared or consumed. He called for all service rooms to be placed further away from the living areas of the house

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<sup>150</sup> Augustin-Charles D'Aviler, *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, 2 volumes (Paris, 1691-1693); *Dictionnaire d'architecture ou explication de tous les termes dont on se sert dans l'architecture, les mathématiques* (Paris: N. Langlois, 1693).

<sup>151</sup> Jean-Baptiste Leblond, *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, 2 volumes (Paris, 1710, 1720, 1738, 1750, 1760).

due to their odours and noises, and all dining rooms to be placed slightly apart from other *salles* and *salons* so that food smells would not diminish the elegance of other specialised rooms. Such specialisation of houses, with specific rooms designated and fitted for single functions, gained increasing acceptance, and were elaborated in various architectural treatises and design books, such as Jean Mariette, *L'Architecture française* (1727-1739), Germain Boffrand, *Livre d'architecture* (1745), and Jacques-François Blondel's, *Architecture française* (1752-1756) and *Cours d'architecture* (1771-1779).<sup>152</sup>

Vichy du Deffand also became particularly enamoured of the novel rooms of her time, even idealising some of these *salons*.<sup>153</sup> She wrote admiringly of these new forms, and was

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<sup>152</sup> Jean Mariette, *L'Architecture française*, 3 volumes (Paris, 1727-1739); Germain Boffrand, *Livre d'architecture, contenant les principes généraux de cet art, et les plans, élévations et profils de quelques-uns des bâtimens faits en France et dans les pays étrangers* (Paris: Cavelier Père, 1745 and Farnborough: Gregg, 1969); Jacques-François Blondel, *Architecture française ou recueil des plans, élévations, coupes et profils des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtel et édifices les plus considérables de Paris*, 3 volumes (Paris: C.A. Jombert, 1752-1756); *Cours d'architecture ou traité de la décoration, distribution et construction des bâtimens, contenant les leçons données en 1750, et les années suivantes*, 4 volumes (Paris: Desaint, 1771-1779).

<sup>153</sup> See *salon* entries in Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (Paris: J.-B. Coignard and Lyon: Joseph Duplain, 1776); *Dictionnaire universel: contenant généralement tous les mots françois, tant vieux que modernes, et les termes de toutes les sciences et des arts* (La Haye: P. Husson, 1690, 1721, 1732, 1752, 1771); *Dictionnaire universel françois et latin*, 5 volumes (Paris: Veuve Delaulne, 1721,

particularly impressed by her cousin's renovations in the countryside, a house that incorporated many of these latest design ideas. Vichy du Deffand received the invitation to visit that spectacular place – Chanteloup – from her cousin, the duchesse de Choiseul [Figure 3]. Terribly sad at being exiled from Paris, Choiseul implored her relative to visit their Amboise estate, attempting to persuade her that their home was in closer proximity than it might appear. 'It is quite beautiful here and not too far – you must come,' she wrote. Vichy du Deffand replied promptly to the request, expressing her great interest in a visit, but catalogued a list of obstacles to such a trip. She cited her poor health, her old age, and her blindness, among other things.<sup>154</sup>

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1732, 1752); Richelet, *Dictionnaire* (Paris: Bruyset Frères, 1728). In the eighteenth-century, the term 'Salon' and 'Sallon' also became used as the abbreviated name for the official art exhibition sponsored by the Academy of Painting and Sculpture in the *Salon Carré* of the Louvre. For contemporary descriptions, see Denis Diderot, *Salons*, edited by Jean Seznec and Jean Adhémar, 4 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957). For a history of *salons* as public art exhibitions, see Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). William Petty, comte de Shelburne, in a letter dated on October 12, 1775, described the success of the artist La Grenée at the annual art exhibition, The Sallon. See Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Walpole Papers, Petty 1775.

<sup>154</sup> Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Papers, Letters between the duchesse de Choiseul and Vichy du Deffand, sixty-two letters, of which some were published in edited form in *Correspondance complète de madame du Deffand avec la duchesse de Choiseul, l'abbé Barthélemy et monsieur Craufort* edited by Sainte-Aulaire (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1866).



Vichy du Deffand did not mention the most significant hurdle, one that would likely have upset Choiseul even more: if she visited, she was in danger of losing her annual royal income and family support.<sup>155</sup> The threat had been issued from the inner royal circle – du Barry, communicated by Mireboix. The reason was straightforward: the Choiseuls were hardly in favour and their Amboise location was not by choice. They were living in the most prominent exile residence in France, a banishment that had come as a result of the duc's falling out with Louis XV's circle in 1770 in an abrupt reversal of his political fortune.<sup>156</sup>

Choiseul and Vichy du Deffand continued to send letters back and forth, with Choiseul frequently talking up the beauty of her family's *château* and the pleasures that her cousin would enjoy

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<sup>155</sup> Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Papers, Letters between Horace Walpole and Vichy du Deffand, in particular, a letter from Vichy du Deffand dated March 13, 1771 that detailed how she had been forbidden from visiting Chanteloup.

<sup>156</sup> Etienne-François Choiseul, duc de, *Choiseul à Rome, 1754-1757, lettres et mémoires inédits*, edited by vicomte de Maurice Boutry (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1895); *Mémoires du duc de Choiseul*, preface by Jean-Pierre Guicciardi and notes by Philippe Bonnet (Paris: Mercure de France, 1987); Marie Vichy du Deffand, la marquise du, *Correspondance complète de madame du Deffand avec la duchesse de Choiseul, l'abbé Barthélemy et monsieur Craufort*, edited by Sainte-Aulaire (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1866); Gaston Maugras, *La Disgrace du duc et la duchesse de Choiseul, la vie à Chanteloup, le retour à Paris, la mort* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1913); *Le Duc et la duchesse de Choiseul, leur vie intime, leurs amis, et leur temps* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1902); *La Duchesse de Choiseul et le patriarche de Ferney* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1889).

if she visited. She even described the chair that she had ordered specifically for Vichy du Deffand, a replica of her one-of-a-kind *tonneau*, so that she would feel more comfortable in an unfamiliar setting. Vichy du Deffand became convinced of the significance of a visit to her cousin, and was struck by just how much the duchesse de Choiseul wanted to see her.<sup>157</sup>

Vichy du Deffand sought to make the necessary arrangements, even seeking the assistance of her friend Mireboix to obtain permission from du Barry. Whether or not she received a favourable reply is now unclear, but a few months later Vichy du Deffand wrote to Choiseul to accept her gracious invitation. Once decided, she eagerly anticipated the visit. This would be her first major trip in nearly twenty years, since a previous visit to her childhood home in Bourgogne. She looked forward to being with her family in this elegant setting, in one of the most spectacular buildings in Europe. This was an exile of extraordinary style, comfort, and luxury, one that garnered much attention and speculation from friends and acquaintances.

Chanteloup, a country estate on a truly exceptional scale, exceeded her expectations.<sup>158</sup> Upon her arrival she found the most

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<sup>157</sup> Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Papers, Letters between the duchesse de Choiseul and Vichy du Deffand, especially October 20, 1771 and May 28, 1773.

<sup>158</sup> The Choiseuls had already developed a reputation in the Parisian property markets, a profile initially raised when they expanded their *hôtel* in Paris during the mid-eighteenth century, later transformed into La Comédie Italienne by Lenoir in the 1780s. See Ferdinand Boyer, 'Un



fashionable design, boasting an exceptional interior unlike any she had previously experienced. In her guest bedroom, she found the replica of the *tonneau* awaiting her arrival, as Choiseul had promised. Passing her days in Amboise, she enjoyed all the pleasures of country living, and even had exceptional luck at *loto*, one of her favourite games. With her blindness, Vichy du Deffand could not experience Chanteloup in the way that most Choiseuls' guests could, however, that did not stop her from appreciating the spaciousness and arrangements that this *château* provided.<sup>159</sup>

Vichy du Deffand admired the luxurious *salon* environment of this Loire country property and praised the architect, Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, as the master of this handiwork.<sup>160</sup> He had been hired to completely renovate Chanteloup in the 1760s, when the duc de Choiseul was at the height of his political career, tasked with creating innovative and elaborate spaces for the Choiseuls. No detail had been spared, with different *salons* made to match every conceivable need of the family – unique and fixed spaces

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Lotissement à Paris au XVIII siècle: de l'Hôtel de Choiseul à la Comédie Italienne', *La Vie urbaine*, (octobre-décembre 1962): 241-260.

<sup>159</sup> Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Papers, Letters between Horace Walpole and Vichy du Deffand, especially May and June, 1772 and later remembrances written on July 29, 1778 to Horace Walpole.

<sup>160</sup> Yale University, *The Horace Walpole Collection*, Papers, Letters between the duchesse de Choiseul and Vichy du Deffand, September 8, 1772.



were created for lounging, gaming, eating, and bathing.<sup>161</sup> Camus brought to Chanteloup the novelties that he and other French architects had been imagining and creating. He imported design concepts from Italy, England, and China, including a grotto, loggia, and pagoda, the latter to serve as a monument to their supporters in exile. It was a project that considerably raised his visibility, and with its completion, Camus achieved a success that catapulted him into prominence in Parisian design circles. More high-profile commissions followed, and he rose to the top ranks of the architects' profession to become one of the leaders of the eighteenth-century *salons*.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières describes these room designs in several chapters in *Le Génie de l'architecture ou l'analogie de cet art avec nos sensations* (Paris: L'Auteur et B. Morin, 1780 and Geneva: Minkoff, 1972).

<sup>162</sup> For further details on Chanteloup, see René Edouard André, *Documents inédits sur l'histoire du château et des jardins de Chanteloup* (Paris: Daupeley-Gouverneur, 1936). Camus modelled Chanteloup's *chinoise*-style pagoda in 1775-1776 after the pagoda that Sir William Chambers designed for Kew Gardens. See Richard Harry Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain and the 'Improvement' of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). Bélanger included a *tente chinoise* at the Pavillon Bagatelle and a *pavillon chinois* at the Folie Sainte-James; for other examples, see the *chinois* pagoda at Chantilly and the turkish tent at Jardin Monceau. Joseph Rykwert's book, *First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980) describes the influences of Italian, Spanish, Turkish, Persian, Mongol, and Chinese designs on French architecture. The *chinoise*-style pagoda is the only extant part of the Chanteloup *château* as it was partially burned in the 1790s, and later disassembled in 1823 for

## **Creating the *salon* rooms: material culture and cosmopolitan sociability**

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a growing group of professional architects competed fiercely for the top commissions in the capital. At the centre of their business was the invention of the *salons*, a key tool in the development of their industry. Professional architects introduced this term, as part of their innovation for upscale housing. As presented in the first chapter, they established the *salon* in the eighteenth century as a novel style of room – not a social institution, or even a type of gathering. In other words, a *salon* was simply a physical setting and an architectural innovation in the eighteenth century. This distinction is crucial and calls for a materialisation of our understanding of eighteenth-century practices and sociability. This chapter will present a clear understanding of the contemporary usage of this term that has been lacking in Enlightenment historiography. Accounting for this physical and material structure will also considerably revise the conventional image of the eighteenth-century '*salon*' institution, largely attributable to a nineteenth-century painting (discussed in the next chapter).

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the use of decorating other structures, most notably the Château de Cangey.

In the eighteenth century, *salons* were simply rooms, unique and fixed spaces for a range of activities. Among the rooms created were *salons de jeux* (game rooms), *salons du billard* (billiard rooms), *salons* and *sallettes des musiques* (music rooms), *salons* and *salles des bains* (bathing rooms), *salons de compagnie* (company rooms), *salles* and *sallettes à manger* (dining rooms), *boudoirs* (similar to dressing rooms), and *cabinets* (offices). These architects created the physical settings from which the *salon* institution later emerged in the nineteenth century. Analysing their trade will lead to an understanding of the eighteenth-century *salon* as it was known in that era.<sup>163</sup>

Le Camus de Mézières, and other French designers including François-Joseph Bélanger, Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart, and Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, developed their businesses by creating these *salon* rooms for an urban aristocracy, catering to individuals willing to pay handsomely for their services.<sup>164</sup> These architects derived enormous fortunes from high-

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<sup>163</sup> In addition to their published works, architects' contracts and designs provide extensive detail on how they envisioned and built these new rooms. See Z/1, Juridictions spéciales; Z/1/A, Cour des Aides; Z/1/F, Chambre du trésor, Bureau des finances et Chambre du domaine de la généralité de Paris. For further analysis, see the series edited by Béatrice d'Andia, *Paris et son patrimoine* (Paris: Action Artistique de la Ville de Paris, 1993) which comprises more than 50 books on Parisian building and describes hundreds of *salons*, *salles*, and *sallettes* in its descriptive inventories of the eighteenth-century *hôtels*.

<sup>164</sup> For contemporary views on these architects, see Antoine-Nicolas Dézallier d'Argenville, *Vie des fameux architectes, depuis la renaissance*



end residential design and construction, offering fashion and novelty to their demanding elite clients. These men were primarily hired for the construction and renovation of *hôtels*, buildings that became a staple of French elites in the eighteenth century during a time when many families reoriented their lives to an urban setting.<sup>165</sup> Hundreds of immense showplaces were built and

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*des arts, avec la description de leurs ouvrages*, 2 volumes (Paris: De Bure l'Aîné, 1787) and Charles-Antoine Jombert, *L'Architecture moderne ou l'art de bien bâtir pour toutes sortes de personnes* (Paris, 1764). For an analysis of the career of Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières, see Rémy G. Saisselin, 'Architecture and Language: The Sensationalism of Le Camus de Mézières,' *British Journal of Aesthetics* (1975): 239-253. On Bélanger, see Jean Stern, *A l'Ombre de Sophie Arnould. François-Joseph Bélanger, architecte des Menus Plaisirs, premier architecte du comte d'Artois* (Paris: Plon, 1930). On Brongniart, see Monique Mosser, et al, *Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart, 1739-1813* (Paris: Les Musées de la Ville de Paris, 1986); Jacques Silvestre de Sacy, *Alexandre-Théodore Brongniart, 1739-1813: sa vie, son oeuvre* (Paris: Plon, 1940). On Ledoux, see Michel Gallet, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 1736-1806* (Paris: Picard, 1980); Emil Kaufmann, *Three Revolutionary Architects: Boullée, Ledoux, and Lequeu* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1952); Anthony Vidler, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux: Architecture and Social Reform at the End of the Ancien Régime* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990). For an overview, see Michael Dennis, *Court and Garden: From the French Hôtel to the City of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986) and Dora Wiebenson, editor, *Architectural Theory and Practice from Alberti to Ledoux* (Chicago: Architectural Publications, 1982).

<sup>165</sup> More than 1,000 *hôtels* were constructed or significantly altered in Paris during the eighteenth century; many records of their design, construction, and usage can be found in the notarial records of the Minutier Central and the Série T and Série Z at the Archives Nationales. More than 100 of these buildings still stand today, used primarily for

remodelled in this era; these new honey-coloured stone structures came to dominate the cityscape, some even rivalling the royal houses of the Luxembourg and the Louvre and dwarfing the existing timber *maisons*.<sup>166</sup> In their size and design, these buildings were comparable to the rural *châteaux* that previously served as the primary residences of these families, many running upwards of twenty thousand square feet over four and five stories.<sup>167</sup>

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government, cultural, and educational purposes. On the growing absence of French families from their *châteaux*, see Jean-Pierre Babelon, *Le Château en France* (Paris: Berger-Lerrault, 1998) and Mark Girouard, *Life in the French Country House* (London: Cassell, 2000).

<sup>166</sup> Almanacs provide descriptions and details of their buildings, including Hébert Alletz and Pons-Augustine Alletz, *Almanach Parisien en faveur des étrangers et des personnes curieuses* (Paris: Duchesnes, 1765) and Luc-Vincent Thiéry, *Almanach du voyageur à Paris, contenant une description de tous les monumens, chefs d'oeuvres des arts, établissemens utiles et autres objets de curiosité* (Paris: Hardouin et Gattey, 1786). See also the Archives Nationales, Série CP, *Catalogue Général des Cartes, Plans, et Dessins d'Architecture*; architectural and topographical guides, including Jean-Baptiste Renou de Chauvigné, *Recherches critiques historique et topographiques sur la ville de Paris* (Paris, 1771-1775) and Pierre-Thomas-Nicolas Hurtaut, *Dictionnaire historique de la ville de Paris et de ses environs* (Paris: Moutard, 1779).

<sup>167</sup> Archives Nationales, Série F, *Versements des Ministères et des Administrations*, F/14, La Collection de cartes illustrées; Archives Nationales, Série N, *Cartes et plans (ancien régime)*, N/III Seine/1044; N/IV Seine/52, *Le Livre Terrier de la Ville de Paris* (Rittmann, 1770). For the houses that appear here, the detailed *plans de masses* provide information about past and present owners, names of occupants, dates, and titles. See also the Archives Nationales, Série Z, *Chambre des*

Providing designer spaces was the crucial service that this emerging class of *architectes* offered to develop their profession. They sold their planning, polish, and creativity to set themselves apart from the masons and builders who had traditionally been responsible for residential projects in France.<sup>168</sup> Offering more than standard construction skills, these men claimed unique expertise and knowledge and established independent businesses outside the confines of guild and masonry organisations.<sup>169</sup> They functioned as middlemen between clients

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*Bâtiments: Procès-verbaux de visites de bâtiments avec des plans 1610-1798*, for plans and descriptions of these buildings.

<sup>168</sup> See Michel Gallet, *Paris Domestic Architecture of the 18th Century*, translated by James C. Palmes (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1972) and Antoine Picon, *French Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment*, translated by Martin Thom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) for discussions of this process; for specific examples, see Jean Louis Baritou and Dominique Foussard, *Contant-Chaussart-Chevotet: un cabinet d'architecte au siècle des Lumières* (Paris: La Manufacture, 1987).

<sup>169</sup> This was an effort begun at the turn of the eighteenth century by such builders as Pierre Bullet, Jean Courtonne, and Michel de Frémin. On the earlier years of this phenomenon, see Pierre Bullet, *L'Architecture pratique* (Paris: E. Michallet, 1691 and 1774); J.L. de Cordemoy, *Nouveau traité de toute l'architecture ou l'art de bastir utile aux entrepreneurs et aux ouvriers* (Paris: J.-B. Coignard, 1714); Jean Courtonne, *Traité de la perspective pratique avec les remarques sur l'architecture* (Paris: Jacques Vincent, 1725); Michel de Frémin, *Mémoires critiques d'architecture* (Paris: C. Saugrain, 1702). For further analysis, see Robert W. Berger, *Antoine le Pautre: A French Architect of the Era of Louis XIV* (New York: New York University Press for the College Art Association of America, 1969) and Michel Le Moël, *L'Architecture privée à Paris au grand siècle* (Paris: Commission des



and workers, choosing and directing an entourage of carpenters, joiners, masons, painters, plasterers, and plumbers at (sometimes unruly) worksites.<sup>170</sup> Once construction (or, in some cases, renovation) was complete, architects typically oversaw the furnishing of these properties, charging a percentage fee for the objects they purchased for their clients, everything from carpets to silverware. Many oversaw ongoing maintenance services for these properties, from landscaping to re-upholstery, charging annual retainer fees.<sup>171</sup>

Architects benefited from the frequently changing fashions of this era, trends they not only encouraged but also stoked.<sup>172</sup>

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Travaux Historiques de la Ville de Paris, 1990). In *L'Architecture française*, 3 volumes (Paris, 1727-1739), Mariette writes that he and his colleagues had opened eyes on the ways to *distribuer* apartments, later copied by Antoine-Nicolas Dézallier d'Argenville in 1787.

<sup>170</sup> Allan Samuel Potofsky, 'The Construction of Paris and the Crises of the *Ancien Régime*: The Police and the People of the Parisian Building Sites, 1750-1789,' *French Historical Studies* 27:1 (2004): 9-48; *The Builders of Modern Paris: The Organization of Labor from Turgot to Napoleon* (Columbia University: Ph.D. dissertation, 1993).

<sup>171</sup> Many of the AN/T and AN/Z records include architects' contracts and invoices that provide detailed evidence of their role as middlemen, their efforts to remain on retainer, and the overall complexity of these projects. For example, see Michel Gallet, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 1736-1806* (Paris: Picard, 1980) for copies of contracts containing his clients' fees, workers' wages, and furniture prices. In addition, copies of Ledoux's workers' contracts provide details on the various services and objects that architects often oversaw, including decorative stoves, marble, decorative plasterwork, wallpaper, and statues.

<sup>172</sup> Archives Nationales, Série Y, *Châtelet et Prévôté d'Ile-de-France*, Y/9505/A to 9507/B, Scellés après décès et les rapports d'experts pour

Their books and marketing prospectuses focused on original and contemporary design, and their advertised renovation services promised to transform old buildings and family properties into residences that fulfilled modern needs.<sup>173</sup> Many of these efforts centred on eliminating the old *parade* style, formal reception and assembly spaces that had once served as the hallmark of elegance, and replacing them with small and stylish *société* rooms.

Specifically, these *architectes* promoted a wide range of *salons*, *salles*, and *sallettes* designed to meet the various functions and activities of their modern-thinking clients.<sup>174</sup>

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les oeuvres d'art plus d'un millier de dossiers relatifs à la construction ou reconstruction de maisons.

<sup>173</sup> For contemporary images of *hôtels*, see Jean-Charles Krafft and N. Ransonnette, *Plans, coupes, élévations des plus belles maisons et hôtels construits à Paris et dans les environs* (Paris: Clousier, 1803). For further analysis, see Dominique Leborgne, 'Hôtels particuliers,' *Monuments Historiques* 172 (1990): 23-36.

<sup>174</sup> Discussion of this transition from *parade* to *société* spaces was prevalent in architects' writings, including Augustin-Charles d'Aviler, *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, 2 volumes (Paris, 1691, 1738, 1760); Jean-Baptiste Leblond, *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, 2 volumes (Paris, 1720); Louis-Jean Desprez, *Ouvrage d'architecture des sieurs Desprez et Panseron* (Paris, 1781); Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Observations sur l'architecture* (Paris: Duchesnes, 1765); Jean-François Monroy, *Traité d'architecture pratique* (Paris: Prault, 1785 and Geneva: Minkoff, 1973); Jean-François de Neufforge, *Receuil élémentaire d'architecture* (Paris, 1757-1768); Antoine Quatremère de Quincy, *Encyclopédie méthodique: architecture*, 4 volumes (Paris: Agasse, 1788-1825); Charles-François Roland le Virloy, *Dictionnaire d'architecture civile, militaire et navale, antique,*



## Architectural formation, competition, and development

Following a trail that had been blazed in the early eighteenth century, when some builders had ambitiously developed the novel field of French architecture, first- and second-generation *architectes* promoted the idea that buildings were art forms and that their emerging field required specialised training in design.<sup>175</sup>

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*ancienne et moderne, et de tous les arts et métiers qui en dépendent* (Paris: Les Libraires Associés, 1770-1771); Charles Séguin, *Manuel d'architecture* (Paris: Didot Fils, 1786 and Geneva: Minkoff, 1973). For further analysis, see Kevin Harrington, *Changing Ideas on Architecture in the Encyclopédie: 1750-1776* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1985) and Werner Szambien, *Symétrie, goût, caractère: théorie et terminologie de l'architecture à l'âge classique 1550-1800* (Paris: Picard, 1988).

<sup>175</sup> For extensive analysis on the emergence of the architectural profession (including educational programs and job training), see Louis Callebat, 'The Education of the Architect in 18<sup>th</sup>-Century France,' *British Journal of Eighteenth Century Studies* 12 (1989): 187-199; Louis Callebat, editor, *Histoire de l'architecte* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998); Paul P. Cret, 'The Ecole des Beaux-Arts and Architectural Education,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 1:2 (April 1941): 3-15; Henri Delaborde, *L'Académie des Beaux-Arts depuis la fondation de l'Institut de France* (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1981); Michel Gallet, *Les Architectes parisiens du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle: dictionnaire biographique et critique* (Paris: Mengès, 1995); Gerard L. Geison, *Professions and the French State, 1700-1900* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984); Catherine Giraudon and Agnès Goudail, *Procès-verbaux de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts* (Paris: Ecole des Chartes, 2001); June Hargrove, editor, *The French Academy: Classicism and Its Antagonists* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990); Spiro Kostof, editor, *The Architect: Chapters in the History of the Profession* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Raymonde Moulin, *Les Artistes: essai de morphologie sociale*



To acquire this expertise, they arranged lectures and extensive apprenticeship, and sought and received funding for educational trips and architecture competitions.<sup>176</sup> The Academy offered competitions for best *hôtel* designs as well as classes on *hôtel* design for budding architects. To promote their own businesses, architects published books to market their past, present, and future projects. They published treatises demonstrating their expertise, particularly focused on the growing market of urban showplaces, and published books on the art of building that stressed their importance as *experts*.<sup>177</sup> Often framed in language of civic

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5 (Paris: Documentation Française, 1985); Gérard Rignon, *Histoire du métier d'architecte en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997).

<sup>176</sup> See Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos, '*Les Prix de Rome*': *concours de l'Académie Royale d'Architecture au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Berger-Levrault, 1984) and Rémy G. Saisselin, 'Neoclassicism: Images of Public Virtue and Realities of Private Luxury,' *Art History* 4:1 (March 1981): 14-36. Clérisseau, Peyre, and Soufflot traveled to Italy to study its classical architecture. At the Hôtel de Bérulle (1766) and Hôtel de Brancas (1770), Brongniart and Bélanger incorporated neoclassical responses to the archaeological excavations beginning at Herculaneum (1741) and Pompeii (1748).

<sup>177</sup> La Chambre des Bâtiments regulated construction in Paris and the surrounding area, including labour and building practices. These archives were augmented in 1891 with the papers of the *Greffiers des bâtiments*, which include reports of the visits and estimates made in *maçonnerie*, *charpenterie*, *couverture*, *menuiserie*, *sculpture* and *peinture*. The *Chambre des Bâtiments* exerted an active control over eighteenth-century Parisian building sites, including requiring owners to use '*experts*' to inspect construction and renovation sites. These *experts* left behind 120,000 documents from their eighteenth-century inspections. The

contribution, these architects wrote of their leadership in beautifying the French landscape.<sup>178</sup>

The industry benefited from several factors that were favourable to these entrepreneurial architects. The city of Paris grew considerably in population and size, from 400,000 to 750,000 people and from 1,000 to 3,000 hectares [Figures 4 and 5].<sup>179</sup> Demand for high-end properties far exceeded the supply of existing buildings and lots, especially in the traditionally elite preserves of the north-eastern quarter of the city (the Marais and Ile Saint Louis neighbourhoods) and the central Saint-Germain area. To cope with these rapid changes, the governments of Louis XV and Louis XVI approved the expansion of the city boundaries,

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*Chambre* also regularly heard complaints about the construction of *hôtels*, including workers' requests for accident compensation and neighbours' concerns about noise and debris.

<sup>178</sup> Meetings were frequently opened with references to architects' civic duty as recorded throughout Henry Lemonnier, editor, *Procès-verbaux de l'Académie Royale d'Architecture, 1671-1793* (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français sous le Patronage de l'Académie des Beaux-Arts, 1929).

<sup>179</sup> Philip Benedict, editor, *Cities and Social Change in Early Modern France* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); 'Urbanization in Eighteenth-Century France: A Reply,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (Summer 1992): 85-96; 'Was the Eighteenth Century an Era of Urbanization in France?' *Journal of Interdisciplinary Theory* 21 (Autumn 1990): 179-215; Bernard Lepetit, 'Urbanization in Eighteenth-Century France: A Comment,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23 (Summer 1992): 73-85. For further discussion, see Françoise Choay and Pierre Merlin, *Dictionnaire de l'urbanisme et de l'aménagement* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988).

giving approval to transform open forests, fields, and meadows on the western edges of the city into new residential quarters.

Bankruptcy regulations were altered, providing architects with the legal means to confiscate properties of non-paying clients and/or non-performing workers. The French monarchy even decided to support some loans to spur development and accelerate existing projects.<sup>180</sup>

Le Camus de Mézières, Bélanger, Brongniart, Ledoux and others effectively filled the market demand, asserting and establishing themselves as authorities and innovators of buildings and properties. Collectively, these architects created highly-profitable businesses, particularly through their development of new neighbourhoods to accommodate the affluent, such as La Chaussée d'Antin, La Planchette, Poissonnière, and Saint Honoré.

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<sup>180</sup> See Antoine Desgodets, *Des Loix des bâtimens* (Paris: Babuty Fils, 1768) for a contemporary discussion of the changing legal frameworks that tipped the balance in favour of architects, builders, and tradesmen. Further information on the rapid transformation of these quarters may be found at the Archives Nationales, Série K, *Monuments Historiques*, K/1025, Embellissements de Paris; *Monuments Historiques*, K/1050 and 1051, Archives du Bureau de la Ville. For analysis of these changes, see Allan Braham, *The Architecture of the French Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Jean-Louis Cohen, *Paris: A City in the Making* (Paris: Editions Babylone, Pavillon de L'Arsenal, 1989); Annie Fourcalt, *La Ville divisée: les ségrégations urbaines en question: France XVIIIe-XXe siècles* (Grâne: Créophis, 1996); Jean-Louis Harouel, *L'Embellissement des villes: l'urbanisme français au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Picard, 1993).



They met the demand for luxurious spaces of leisure and work that also served as families' public emblems of power and wealth.<sup>181</sup>

Newly established partnerships and consortiums with bankers and speculators considerably expanded their influence and profit margins. Bélanger, Ledoux, and Perlin joined with financiers Bouret de Vézalay, Laborde, Marin de La Haye, and Thun to develop La Planchette and Poissonière in the north-central area of the city. Brongniart and Aubert worked with Beaujon on the development of the Saint-Honoré. In La Chaussée d'Antin, Boullée, Brongniart, Ledoux, and Wailly created a highly profitable consortium that led to several new streets lined with houses that were the largest and most elaborate yet built in Paris, including the Hôtels Brunoy, Dervieux, Guimard, Laborde, Monaco, Montesquieu, Montholon, and Montmorency.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Archives Nationales, Z/1/F/955-957, Répertoire des plans du quartier Planchette, Poissonière, et Saint-Honoré déposés au Bureau des Finances, 1770. On La Chaussée d'Antin, see Pierre Pinon, *Lotissements spéculatifs et formes urbaines le quartier de la Chaussée d'Antin à la fin de l'ancien régime* (Nanterre: APRAUS, 1986). On the Place Vendôme in the Saint-Honoré quarter, see Rochelle Ziskin, *The Place Vendôme: Architecture and Social Mobility in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): especially 53-58.

<sup>182</sup> For discussion on real estate speculation in this era, see Pierre Pinon, 'Lotissements spéculatifs, formes urbaines et architecture à la fin de l'ancien régime,' in *Soufflot et l'architecture des Lumières: actes du colloque, 1778-1792* (Paris, 1980): 178-192. At the Archives Nationales, Série T, *Papiers séquestrés pendant la Révolution*, private papers provide details on some of these buildings, including Laborde (1097), Montholon (115), Montmorency (133), Montesquieu (349).

Social observer Louis-Sébastien Mercier noted that architecture was one of three fields in which fortunes could be made in eighteenth-century Paris (the other two being finance and law). Mercier described a brisk pace of development, noting that magnificent showplaces were magically appearing out of the ground, and during which at least one-third of the city was new or rebuilt.<sup>183</sup> These construction projects were so successful that some of the top architects of the eighteenth century earned considerable wealth (and sometimes even noble status) from their entrepreneurship and management. Often, they converted their riches into *hôtels* that they designed and built for themselves. In the 1770s and 1780s, some had accumulated enough capital and credit to live in *hôtels*, buildings that had previously been beyond their economic reach. Not only were they designing these showplaces, they were living in these high-end buildings.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> See Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Le Tableau de Paris*, 12 volumes (Amsterdam: 1782-1788) for details of Parisian building, particularly 1: 389-391; 2: 73-92, 126-137. For further analysis, see J.C. Bonnet, editor, *Louis-Sébastien Mercier: un hérétique en littérature* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1995).

<sup>184</sup> Some architects were granted nobility through royal investiture in recognition of their design accomplishments, thus creating a new social type, the architect-aristocrat; see Robert Neuman, *Robert de Cotte and the Perfection of Architecture in Eighteenth-Century France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). For examples of other architects' attempts to elevate their social standing, see the introduction of Thierry Verdier, *Augustin-Charles d'Aviler* (Montpellier: Presses du Languedoc, 2003), which describes the changing of his name from Aviler to

**Sensational rooms and speaking architecture: *salons, salles, sallettes***

Mercier credited these architects with bringing splendour and opulence to the Parisian cityscape.<sup>185</sup> In his view, though, more exceptional than these facades were the interiors of these buildings, created at a greater cost than the building's construction. Mercier believed that these spaces were the true genius of Parisians architects. Inside these lavish rooms, exceptional arrangements were created using the French invention of *la distribution*, a flooring plan incorporating highly-specialised rooms

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d'Aviler, a more commanding name due to his usage of the participle (d'), an indication of nobility.

<sup>185</sup> For historical aerial views of these new buildings, see Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, Maps, *Delagrive*, 1728; *Turgot*, 1734-1739; Jean Boutier, *Les Plans de Paris des origines, 1493, à la fin du XVIIIe siècle: étude, carto-bibliographie et catalogue collectif* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2002); Robert Estivals and Jean-Charles Gaudy, *La Bibliologie graphique: l'évolution graphique des plans de Paris 1530-1798* (Paris: Société de Bibliologie et de Schématisation, 1983); Jean-Baptiste Renou de Chauvigné Jaillot, *Recherches critiques historique et topographiques sur la ville de Paris* (Paris: A.-M. Lottin Aîné, 1772-1775); *Plan de Verniquet*, 1792; Aristide Michel Perrot, *Petit atlas pittoresque des quarante-huit quartiers de la ville de Paris* (Paris: Ingénieur, 1834); Jean-Luc Pinol, editor, *Atlas historique des villes de France* (Paris: Hachette, 1996). For further description, see Lise Andries, 'Paris et l'imaginaire de la ville dans les almanachs français du XVIIIe siècle,' in Section 1, *The Secular City: Studies in the Enlightenment Presented to Haydn Mason*, edited by T.D. Hemming, E. Freeman, and D. Meakin (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1994): 15-26.



in perfect order. In characteristic hyperbole, Mercier claimed that the magnificence of the entire nation could be found inside these walls, which were settings unknown to any other nation on earth.<sup>186</sup>

While Mercier overstated the unique quality of French design, he did not underestimate French architects' focus on their *distribution* systems. Architectural critic Pierre Patte described a veritable revolution accomplished by architects with their *distribution*.<sup>187</sup> These men promoted their specific design system as an art and claimed that their special talents and training allowed for exceptional planning solutions for their clients.<sup>188</sup> Within that system, these *architectes* advanced the idea that highly differentiated spaces were a necessary part of a desirable manner of living. In their view, the previous French style of *grandes salles*, or great rooms that served as the centre of communal life, was no longer satisfying. In their place, smaller *salons*, *salles*, and *sallettes* were necessary to accommodate contemporary living.

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<sup>186</sup> Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Le Tableau de Paris*, 12 volumes (Amsterdam: 1782-1788: 2: 378-385.

<sup>187</sup> See the introduction to Pierre Patte, *Monuments érigés en France à la gloire de Louis XV* (Paris: Desaint, 1765): 6; for further discussion, see Pierre Patte, *Mémoires sur les objets les plus importants de l'architecture* (Paris: Rozet, 1769).

<sup>188</sup> For examples of these efforts, see Charles-Etienne Briseux, *Architecture moderne ou l'art de bien bâtir pour toutes sortes de personnes*, 2 volumes (Paris: Claude Jombert, 1728 and 1764); *L'Art de bien bâtir des maisons de campagne ou un traité de leur distribution, de leur construction, et de leur décoration* (Paris: Prault Père, 1743, 1761).

They believed that one must enter specific types of rooms, each marked with a transition or passage denoting a different activity. Increased use of corridors, replacing the traditional interconnected rooms, provided further autonomy among each setting; the proliferation and specialisation of these rooms created more intimate and personalised surroundings.<sup>189</sup>

According to Le Camus de Mézières, these rooms should also aim to increase the sensations of the occupants; in a related idea, Germain Boffrand wrote, as part of his *architecture parlante* or speaking architecture, that spaces should 'inspire appropriate moods of joy and seriousness'.<sup>190</sup> Central to both of these systems, and the concept of *la distribution*, was the notion of *confort*, the idea that individual comfort must also be accommodated as a means to satisfy these new requirements. Comfort was achieved largely through an emphasis on the new forms of sociability, in spaces referred to as *société* and *compagnie*. In these spaces, architects provided for the social needs of each occupant, necessarily unique for each client, which resulted in a proliferation of these novel forms of sociability. As part of these new designs, architects were even more focused on the everyday comfort of their clients, even when meeting such

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<sup>189</sup> Robin Middleton, 'Enfilade: The Spatial Sequence in French Hôtels of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Century,' *Daidalos* 42 (December 1991): 84-95.

<sup>190</sup> See Michel Gallet and Jorg Garms, editors, *Germain Boffrand 1667-1754: l'aventure d'un architecte indépendant* (Paris: Herscher, 1986): 10-17.

needs might sacrifice the grandeur of these spaces. This was a noticeable change from early eighteenth-century living, and the creation of the various *salon* rooms was part of this evolution.<sup>191</sup>

Dining rooms – novel spaces in eighteenth-century Paris – became a particular focus of fashion [Figures 6 and 7].<sup>192</sup> Ledoux

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<sup>191</sup> For a discussion of the spaces of *confort*, see Philippe Ariès and George Duby, editors, *A History of Private Life*, translated by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge and London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988); Monique Eleb-Vidal, *L'Architecture de la vie privée XVIIe-XIXe siècles* (Brussels: Archives d'Architecture Moderne, 1989). See John E. Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities and Design in Early Modern Britain and Early America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) for a discussion of this topic in Britain and America. This is a theme taken up in Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun, *The Birth of Intimacy: Privacy and Domestic Life in Early Modern Paris*, translated by Jocelyn Phelps (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991). I have also reviewed the *mémoires* that describe the examination of more than 2,000 inventories that were the basis for Pardailhé-Galabrun's project and are held in the Roland Mousnier Center of the Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne. Approximately ten percent of these inventories detail the contents of upscale housing and provide a broader context for studying these environments.

<sup>192</sup> The arrangement of kitchens and dining rooms preoccupied many residential architects including Mariette who wrote that 'It is necessary yet to confess that the service of the table is made difficult when the kitchens are placed too far apart, as one is obliged to cross the court to arrive at the dining room'. See Jean Mariette, *L'Architecture française*, 3 volumes (Paris, 1727-1739): 210. Mariette called for an improvement in the *distribution* of kitchens, noting that it was 'preferable to have covered corridors between kitchens and dining rooms, even if this meant placing kitchens below ground'. Blondel wrote that one should eat on 'superior floors', far away from the places of food preparation. He described the kitchens as areas that smelled awful, created horrible noise, and were populated with unruly servants. For further discussion, see Claude



created a dining room for mademoiselle Guimard surrounded with hothouse flowers and floor-to-ceiling nature murals [Figures 8 and 9]. For mademoiselle Dervieux, Bélanger constructed a double-height dining room with skylights. In the Châtelets' dining room, Cherpitel designed three-dimensional effects with inset mirrors, white marble fountains, and cornucopia-themed plasterwork. Summer and winter dining rooms were added to the Aumonts' house on Place XV, complete with arabesque decorations.<sup>193</sup>

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Mignot, 'De la Cuisine à la salle à manger, ou de quelques détours de l'art de la distribution,' *XVIIe Siècle* 162 (1989): 17-35. Concern about food odours often led architects to place dining rooms in separate wings, separated by a staircase or a long corridor to the kitchen areas. For example, see the Hôtel de Varangeville by Gabriel, rue Saint Dominique, and Hôtel de M. Crozat le jeune by Cartaud, rue de Richelieu. Leblond remarked that these arrangements forced owners to employ a larger domestic staff for assuring excellent table service; however, he thought this was preferable than the alternative of having kitchens and domestic staff near the owners' living areas. See *offices* in Jean-Baptiste Leblond, *Cours d'architecture qui comprend les ordres de Vignole*, 2 volumes (Paris, 1720).

<sup>193</sup> Several *hôtels* were ornamented with arabesques, particularly in *salles à manger* and *salon des bains*, including the Hôtel d'Aumont (1777), Hôtel Beaujon (1781-1783), Hôtel de Breteuil (1778), Hôtel de Chaulnes (1785-1788), Hôtel Hosten (1793-1795), Hôtel de Montholon (1786), and Hôtel d'Uzès (1768-1769). A variation of this trend, the *grotesque*, was used in architectural details, furniture, and panelling; see André Chastel, *La Grotesque* (Paris: Le Promeneur, 1988). On arabesques, see Bernard Jacques, editor, *Les Papiers peints en arabesque de la fin du XVIIIe siècle* (Rixheim: Musée du Papier Peint, 1994) and Alexia Lebeurre, 'Le 'genre' arabesque: nature et diffusion des modèles dans le décor intérieur à Paris, 1760-90,' *Histoire de l'Art* 42-43 (October 1998): 83-98. Clérisseau painted *arabesques* at the Hôtel Grimod de la

Nature-inspired decoration lined the walls of new eating rooms at the Gallifets' and Beaujons' houses, while at Bagatelle, Bélanger crafted a large dining room with arabesque paintings, Pompeiian-inspired designs characterised by fanciful scrolls of flowers and mythical figures [Figure 10].<sup>194</sup>

When the Matignon-Grimaldis inherited the Saint-Germain *hôtel* from his parents, they hired Jean Courtonne to renovate their house to the highest standards of *confort*. Courtonne arranged for five *salles à manger* (dining rooms) to be added throughout the building, replacing the outdated usage of temporary trestle tables for meals. When the Matignons requested spaces specifically for parties, Courtonne designed a separate structure on the property, a

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Reynière by 1775, which are now held in the collections of the V&A Museum. He also published *Nouvelles collection d'arabesques propres à la décoration des appartements* (1778). Similarly, François-Joseph Bélanger incorporated this decorative motif at the Pavillon de Bagatelle (1777) and at Fontainebleau (1780-1785).

<sup>194</sup> Beatrice d'Andia, *De Bagatelle à Monceau: 1778-1978, les folies au XVIIIe siècle à Paris: Domaine de Bagatelle* (Paris: Musée Carnavalet, 1979); Gaston Capon, *Les Petites maisons galantes au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1902); Bernard H. Dams and Andrew Zega, *Pleasure Pavilions and Follies: In the Gardens of the Ancien Régime* (Paris: Flammarion, 1995); M. Fouquier, *Paris au XVIIIe siècle: ses folies* (Paris: Emile-Paul, 1912). For a further example, see Paula Rea Radisich, *Hubert Robert: Painted Spaces of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) who devotes a chapter to the fashionable decoration of ancient ruins in dining rooms, including descriptions of Robert's four paintings of celebrated ancient Roman antiquities that adorned the dining room of the Château de Fontainebleau, which attempted to connect the Bourbon dynasty to ancient imperial Roman roots.



garden pavilion with a large *salle à manger* and a *salon de compagnie*.<sup>195</sup>

After purchasing property on the newly-created Place Louis XV in 1769, Laurent Grimod de la Reynière ordered the building of two dining rooms from his architect Barré, one for formal usage on the ground floor, and one for more casual suppers on the first floor. In his *Guide des Amateurs et des Etrangers Voyageurs à Paris*, Luc-Vincent Thiéry described the formal dining room: 'between two courts and a small interior garden, the dining room of the gourmet was wonderfully considered ... heated by four stoves with two fountains placed in a large adjacent corridor, near the buffet ... one entered via the billard room, through an octagonal vestibule.'<sup>196</sup> The informal supper room was decorated with orange curtains and velvet armchairs; pyramidal servers decorated the mahogany table. On the walls were twenty-two prints of a Chinese battle scene, engraved after the *Conquêtes de l'Empereur de la Chine*, a commission by the government of Manchu Emperor

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<sup>195</sup> L.H. Labande, 'L'Hôtel Matignon,' *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* (1935): 257-270, 347-353; Bernard Mahieu, *L'Hôtel Matignon* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1952); Gaétan Guillot, *Les Portraits des Matignon-Grimaldi et le château de Torigni-sur-Vire* (Saint-Lô: Imprimerie de Jacqueline, 1905).

<sup>196</sup> See Luc-Vincent Thiéry's *Guide des Amateurs et des Etrangers Voyageurs à Paris* (1787): I: 103. In addition, J. Winckelmann describes the space in *Lettres familières*, edited by H. Janson (Amsterdam, 1781): II: 215.



Kao-Tsung to French artists in the mid-1760s.<sup>197</sup> The baronne d'Oberkirch claimed that she passed two and a half hours looking at the entire house and saw just half of it; like others, she praised the decoration and noted that 'ladies of the court are exceedingly jealous.'<sup>198</sup>

In these new luxury rooms specifically reserved for meals, dining tables and sideboards became common objects, sometimes with exchangeable tops and detachable legs for varied numbers of seating. Furniture makers such as Reboul and Riesener expanded their businesses to include new items in their inventory. Several companies opened or expanded their range in table decoration. With tables remaining a permanent fixture in the

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<sup>197</sup> See *Catalogue de Vente* by J.B.P. Le Brun for Grimod de la Reynière, 1792 and 1793 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Doucet Collection); *Catalogue de Vente* by A.J. Paillet and A.T. Baudouin for Grimod de la Reynière, 1797 (Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris); Minutier Central de Notaires de Paris, XXV, 993 Sale of furniture by Alexandre-Balthazar Grimod de la Reynière to Jean Toussaint Château, Marchand de Meuble, 9 Messidor, An VIII. For further discussion, see M. Dumolin, 'Signalement de la vente de l'Hôtel de la Reynière,' *Ville de Paris Commission Municipale de Vieux Paris, Procès-Verbaux, Année 1926* (Paris, 1930): 143-144 and (June 30, 1928): 138-139; Louis Réau, 'La Décoration de l'Hôtel Grimod,' *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français* (1937): 7-16.

<sup>198</sup> La baronne Henriette-Louise d'Oberkirch, *Mémoires de la baronne d'Oberkirch sur la cour de Louis XVI et la société française avant 1789*, edited by Suzanne Burkard (Paris: Mercure de France, 1989): 211-213. For similar comments, see William Beckford, *The Life of William Beckford*, edited by J.W. Oliver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932): January 19, 1784, 161-162.

room, rather than taken down immediately after meals, demand grew for small and often whimsical objects to decorate this surface. The royal manufactory of Sèvres expanded their collection of statuettes, typically sold as a packaged scene. For example, in their sales catalogues, Sèvres showed one table arrangement that comprised Venus, Mercury, and Pigalle; and one of Bacchus escorted by nymphs carrying baskets of fruits. Independent artisans, such as the goldsmith Cousinet, created silver-gilt statuettes that represented the different countries of the world. Makers of soft and hard porcelain provided a range of utilitarian objects – oil bottles, sugar and salt containers, spice boxes, mustard pots –all dressed up to remain on dining tables, side boards, and buffets. One vendor even marketed centrepieces of aquariums, with water and live fish.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> For some illustrations and examples, see Henri Havard, *Dictionnaire de l'ameublement depuis le XIIIe siècle jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Maison Quantin, 1890). For descriptions of small table decoration, see Guillem Scherf, *Clodion et la sculpture française de la fin du XVIIIe siècle: actes du colloque organisé au musée du Louvre par le service culturel les 20 et 21 mars 1992* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1993). Clodion was a sought-after object sculptor and created pieces for the *salles à manger* of mademoiselle Deschamps and the duc de Choiseul-Praslin. A design for an eighteenth-century table aquarium is held in the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Department of Decorative Arts. For further discussion of eighteenth-century objects and decoration, see Natacha Coquery, *L'Espace du pouvoir: de la demeure privée à l'édifice public, Paris 1700-1790* (Paris: Seli Arslan, 2000); *Les Courtisans et le crédit à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (San Domenico: European University Institute, 1998); Carolyn Sargentson, *Merchants and Luxury Markets: The Marchands Merciers of Eighteenth-Century Paris* (London: V&A



Le Camus de Mézières devoted considerable attention to his design of *salles à manger*, describing this room as a primary place of sociability, preferably laid out in a central location with satellite rooms set up for music and games. Inside this space, Le Camus de Mézières applied his supplemental system, which he referred to as his signature style, 'the genius of sensations.'<sup>200</sup> He first set out to arouse the senses by building unusually shaped rooms, either round rooms because they were the most fun, or oval rooms as they were the most voluptuous. Then, through 'decorating in a thousand different ways,' he created original rooms for his clients. Using a range of objects, pictures, and arrangements, Le Camus de Mézières set out to pique curiosity, enhance feelings of desire, and thus lead to greater perceptions by individuals who remained in them. Food and confectionery were necessary ingredients; the right smells were created by plants and flowers; atmospheric lighting came from candles and mirrors. Seasonal redecorations provided continuous change and novelty. These spaces were further boosted by interior

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Museum, 1996); Katie Scott, 'Art and Industry,' *Journal of Design History* 12:1 (2000): 1-19; *The Rococo Interior: Decoration and Social Spaces in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Pierre Verlet, 'Le Commerce des objets d'arts et les marchands-merciers à Paris au XVIIIe siècle,' *Annales ESC* 1 (January-March 1958).

<sup>200</sup> Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières based the title of his book on this system, *Le Génie de l'architecture ou l'analogie de cet art avec nos sensations* (Paris: L'Auteur et B. Morin, 1780 and Geneva: Minkoff, 1972), which he then explains in his opening chapter.



murals of pastoral landscapes, decorative ceramic stoves (preferably in the shapes of exotic trees and even goddesses), and fountains in the shapes of nymphs and fish [Figure 11].<sup>201</sup>

In the view of Le Camus de Mézières, the key was to aim for gaiety and increased sensations, always keeping in mind that constraint is foreign to pleasure. Jean-François de Bastide elaborated on these themes in his popular novel *La petite maison*, which employed rich and sensational decorations as a central device in his elaborate story of seduction. In a pavilion on the Seine, Bastide used a procession through highly ornamented rooms to heighten tension before his scene of romantic encounter. His characters – an older nobleman and the young woman he sought to conquer – passed through rooms of increasing beauty: circular *salons* to domed *salles à manger* (with a mechanical table rising from the kitchen), on through a yellow and blue *salle* to the ultimate destination, the *boudoir*, decorated with seashells and pagodas and covered with mirrors. According to Bastide's story,

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<sup>201</sup> See the *salles à manger* section of Le Camus de Mézières, *Le Génie de l'architecture*, 1780 and 1972: especially 136-141 and 143-150. For other examples, see Jean-François Cabestan, 'Infortunes de l'art de la distribution: le cas de l'Hôtel de Belle-Isle à Paris,' Chapter 6, Hôtel Distribution, in *Capitales culturelles, capitales symboliques: Paris et les expériences Européennes, XVIIIe-XXe siècles* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2002); Bruno Pons and Christian Baulez, *L'Hôtel de Roquelaure* (Paris: Ministère de l'Équipement: Imprimerie Nationale, 1988); Howard C. Rice, *L'Hôtel de Langeac, Jefferson's Paris Residence* (Paris: H. Lefebvre, 1947).

the architecture and decoration were the necessary tools of his seduction.<sup>202</sup>

Le Camus de Mézières and others highlighted a second important concept – *commodité* – which focused on matters of utility as they sought to create higher-functioning environments. Not as many specific designs emerged from these efforts, but there was one object that all agreed was necessary for their novel *salons*, *salles*, and *sallettes*. In response to the common problem of fluctuating temperature, architects promoted the use of stoves to replace fireplaces [Figure 12]. Typically situated in the four corners of a room, stoves were offered as a means to improve the circulation of heat, and were therefore preferable to the concentrated source of fireplaces. Architects designed corner niches, lined with marble in high-end projects, specifically for

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<sup>202</sup> Jean-François de Bastide, 'La petite maison,' in *Le Nouveau spectateur* (Amsterdam-Paris, 1758): 361–412. In 'The Name of the Boudoir,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 53:2 (June 1994): 193–198, Ed Lilley documents the emergence of the *boudoir* as a novel room in the second half of the eighteenth century and cites an *Encyclopédie* plan by François Franque as an early published example. Lilley gives details on two literary references: *La Philosophie dans le boudoir*, in which the Marquis de Sade presents the *boudoir* as a place of sexual activity, and *La Petite maison*, in which the *boudoir* and other novel rooms act as seducers. For further discussion of these themes, see Richard Rand, editor, *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).



these objects.<sup>203</sup> Most popular were white *faïence* stoves, often embellished with gilding, with different types of decoration to disguise their bases (usually hidden by a buffet or credenza) and piping (common ornaments were palm trees and Venus figures).<sup>204</sup>

Reactions to these innovations were quite positive.<sup>205</sup> For

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<sup>203</sup> Jean-Baptiste Le Brun, *Almanach historique et raisonné des architectes, peintres, sculpteurs, graveurs et ciseleurs* (Paris: Delalain, 1776-1777); *Encyclopédie contenant une description abrégée des principaux arts et métiers* (Paris: Crépy, 1774); Bruno Pons, *De Paris à Versailles 1699-1736: les sculpteurs ornemanistes parisiens et l'art décoratif bâtiments du roi* (Strasbourg: Association des Publications Près les Universités de Strasbourg, 1986); Daniel Rabreau, *Architectural Drawings of the Eighteenth Century*, translated by Ian Monk (Paris: Bibliothèque de l'Image, 2001); François Souchal, Françoise de la Moureyre, and Henriette Dumuis, *French Sculptors of the 17th and 18th Centuries: The Reign of Louis XV* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993).

<sup>204</sup> For drawings of these objects, see Jean-Charles Delafosse, *Nouvelle iconologie historique, ou attributs hiéroglyphiques* (Amsterdam: C.S. Roos, A. Forke, n.d.); Jean Démosthène Dugourc, *215 Dessins provenant de la vente après décès de l'artiste exécutés entre 1770 et 1790* (Paris: Arcole, 1988); Louis Gustave Taravel, *Collection de dessins des poêles de formes antiques et modernes* (Paris: Manufacture du Sieur Ollivier, 1780). On Dugourc, see Luis Belhaouari, 'Jean Démosthène Dugourc et le dessin d'histoire dans la second moitié du XVIIIe siècle,' *Histoire de l'Art* 20 (1992): 67-78. For further details on chimney manufacturing and innovations, see Pierre Hébrard, *Caminologie ou traité des cheminées* (Dijon: F. Desventes, 1756).

<sup>205</sup> See Marc René, marquis de Montalembert, *Mémoires* (Académie Royal des Sciences, November 12, 1763). Montalembert wrote how he was impressed by the new objects; inspired to develop a spin-off invention, he created designs for a chimney-stove that incorporated the best of both types of heating. These *cheminées-poêles* and *poêles français*, as they came to be known, combined the elegance of a fireplace with the modern heating technology that clients demanded. While not



example, Dufort de Cheverny recorded a visit to a new *hôtel*, near the entrance to the Champs Elysées, and expressed his surprise that there was 'not a chimney piece in sight, everything being heated by stoves with concealed servicing.'<sup>206</sup>

Architects' innovations were discussed at length in the many guides to the capital, and the *salon* rooms and their contents received nearly universal praise. Germain Brice, Luc-Vincent Thiéry, Antoine-Nicolas Dézallier d'Argenville, and others attributed this novelty to Parisian architects, even describing them as responsible for creating the leading houses in the world.<sup>207</sup>

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many of Montalembert's hybrid products appear to have been purchased, the new straight stoves (those that did not have fireplace features) were incorporated into large numbers of eighteenth-century *hôtels*. According to Natacha Coquery, *L'Hôtel aristocratique: le marche du luxe a Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1998), the Hôtel Kinsky installed 15 *poêles* (see Archives Nationales, Série T, *Papiers séquestrés pendant la Révolution*, Kinsky (220/1-220/7), and the Hôtel Fitz-James had 10 *poêles*. According to Alexia Lebeurre, a *poêle* was also installed at the Hôtel Gouffier de Thoix.

<sup>206</sup> Jean-Nicolas Dufort de Cheverny, *Mémoires*, (Paris: Les Amis de l'Histoire, 1970): 317-318.

<sup>207</sup> The following tourist guides offer additional information: Abbé Antonini, *Mémorial de Paris et de ses environs à l'usage des voyageurs* (Paris: Musier, 1734); Germain Brice, *Description nouvelle de la ville de Paris et de tout ce qu'elle contient de plus remarquable* (Paris: N. Le Gras, 1716, 1725, 1752); Antoine-Nicolas Dézallier d'Argenville, *Voyage pittoresque de Paris, ou indication de tout ce qu'il y a de plus beau dans cette grande ville en peinture, sculpture et architecture* (Paris: De Bure l'Aîné, 1749, 1765, 1778); Jean de la Caille, *Description de la ville et des Faubourgs de Paris* (Paris: Editions les Yeux Ouverts, 1714); Claude-François-Xavier Mercier de Compiègne, *Manuel du voyageur à*

Builders from provincial French cities purchased plans from Parisian architects in order to market this city's architecture styles to their clients.<sup>208</sup> Students from many European countries trained at the Paris Academy for several years before returning home. The Adam brothers, leading architects from England, made several trips to Paris to meet with French architects and tour their

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*Paris: contenant la description des spectacles* (Paris: Favre, An VII, 1798-1799); Claude-Marin Saugrain, *Nouveau voyage de France, géographique, historique et curieux, à l'usage des étrangers et des françois: contenant une exacte explication de tout ce qu'il y a de singulier et de rare à voir dans ce royaume* (Paris: Saugrain l'Aîné, 1720); Luc-Vincent Thiéry, *Paris tel qu'il étoit avant la révolution, ou description raisonnée de cette ville, de sa banlieue et de tout ce qu'elles contenoient de remarquable, pour servir de guide aux amateurs et aux étrangers* (Paris: Delaplace, 1795).

<sup>208</sup> For examples of the transformation of townhouses in regional cities, and the considerable influence of Parisian taste, see Jean-Pierre Bardet, *Rouen aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles: les mutations d'un espace social* (Paris: Société d'Édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, 1983); Marc Breitman and Rob Krier, editors, *Le Nouvel Amiens* (Liège and Brussels: Mardaga, 1989); Maurice Culot and Nada Jakovljevic, editors, *Trouville* (Liège and Brussels: Mardaga, 1989); Jean-Louis Harouel, *L'Embellissement des villes: l'urbanisme français au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Picard, 1993); Roger Kain, 'Classical Urban Design in France: The Transformation of Nancy in the Eighteenth Century,' *Connaissance* 26 (November 1979): 190-197; Pierre Lelièvre, *Nantes au XVIIIe siècle: urbanisme et architecture* (Paris: Picard, 1988); Jean-Claude Perrot, *Genèse d'une ville moderne: Caen au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Mouton, 1975); Marcel Roncayolo, *Les Grammaires d'une ville: essai sur le genèse des structures urbaines à Marseilles* (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1996); Bernard Sournia and Jean-Louis Vayssettes, *Montpellier: la demeure classique* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1994); Christian Talliard, *Bordeaux à l'âge classique* (Bordeaux: Mollat, 1997).



buildings. King Gustav III of Sweden sent his team of builders to copy designs of the *palais*, *hôtels*, and *pavillons*. Polish architect Jana Christyana Kamsetzer spent days in the Hôtel Grimod de la Reynière designed by Barré, taking detailed notes and even measurements in an attempt to duplicate this design for a summer palace near Warsaw. The elector of Bavaria and the prince-bishop of Würzburg hired Germain Boffrand to design their new residences, and diplomat Thomas Jefferson was so 'violently smitten' with Parisian buildings that he would visit *hôtel* construction sites almost daily.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> See introduction to Robert Adam, *The Architecture, Decoration, and Furniture of Robert & James Adam: Selected from 'Works in Architecture', Published in 1778-1782*, edited by William Helburn (New York: Helburn, 1838); Cyril Bordier, *Louis Le Vau: architecte* (Paris: L. Laget, 1998) for King Gustav III's interest in French architecture, especially his fascination with Le Petit Trianon. Kamsetzer produced seven studies of the Hôtel Grimod which are now held at the University of Krakow Library. See also Archives Nationales, Série T, *Papiers Séquestrés pendant la Révolution: Grimod de la Reynière* (743, 1632); Archives Nationales, Série Q, *Biens nationaux et affaires domaniales*, Q/1/1138 and 1139, Archives de Paris, *Jurisdiction consulaire, Grimod de la Reynière*: 31 DQ/10 1621 and 1622, June 30, 1779. See Michel Gallet and Jorg Garms, editors, *Germain Boffrand 1667-1754: l'aventure d'un architecte indépendant* (Paris: Herscher, 1986), for a discussion of his commissions, including an analysis of his book *Livre d'architecture, contenant les principes généraux de cet art, et les plans, élévations et profils de quelques-uns des bâtimens faits en France et dans les pays étrangers* (Paris: Cavelier Père, 1745 and Farnborough: Gregg, 1969). See Thomas Jefferson, *Memoir, Correspondence and Miscellanies, from the Papers of Thomas Jefferson* (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1830), Jefferson to Madame de Tasse, March 20, 1787. For further discussion



While there was nearly universal enthusiasm for these novelties, a few individuals did not find these changes to their liking. In the view of Horace Walpole, these architects had simply been responsible for a 'confusion of rooms' – walls, doors, separations, room after room, spaces that were too specialised and did not allow for any flexibility. He also disapproved of the ostentation of contemporary decoration, noting in a letter to an English friend: 'Yesterday, I dined at La Borde's, the great banker of the court. Lord! Madam, how little and poor all your houses in London will look after this! ... and then you go into the *petit cabinet*, and then into the great *salle*, and the gallery, and the billiard-room, and the eating-room; and all these must be hung with crystal lights and looking-glasses from top to bottom; and then you must stuff them fuller than they will hold with granite tables and porphyry urns, and bronzes, and statues, and vases, and the Lord or the devil knows what ... and if you have anybody that has any taste to advise you, your eating-room must be hung with huge hunting-pieces in frames of all coloured golds, and at top of one of them you may have a setting-dog, who having sprung a wooden partridge, it be flying a yard off against the wainscot.'<sup>210</sup>

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on this topic and the considerable collections that Jefferson accumulated while in Paris, see George Green Shackelford, *Thomas Jefferson's Travels in Europe, 1784-1789* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995): 101-102. See the Academy records, O/1/1929/1-3 for student records.

<sup>210</sup> Horace Walpole, *Letters*, edited by Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1904): VI: 1764-1766, Letter 1079, Walpole to the

Jacques-François Blondel, director of the Academy of Architecture, while initially supportive of the changes, ultimately became an outspoken critic.<sup>211</sup> However, his extensive publications have been consistently relied upon by historians and have contributed to some aspects of the *salon* mythology by creating a misconception of eighteenth-century interiors. It is important to note that his theoretical writings were largely disregarded by practitioners; they were not in keeping with the houses designed and built in the that era.<sup>212</sup>

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countess of Suffolk, December 5, 1765. For similar comments, see Walpole to Anne Pitt, December 25, 1765.

<sup>211</sup> Jacques-François Blondel, *De la Distribution des maisons de plaisance, et de la décoration des édifices en général*, 2 volumes (Paris: C.A. Jombert, 1737-1738 and Farnborough, 1967); *Architecture française ou recueil des plans, élévations, coupes et profils des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtel et édifices les plus considérables de Paris* (Paris: C.A. Jombert, 1752-1756); *Cours d'architecture ou traité de la décoration, distribution et construction des bâtiments, contenant les leçons données en 1750, et les années suivantes*, 4 volumes (Paris: Desaint, 1771-1779).

<sup>212</sup> Blondel served as the director the Academy of Architecture for decades and authored several articles for the *Encyclopédie*. Historians of eighteenth-century France have relied heavily on Blondel's theoretical writings, even using it as evidence of actual practice. For example, Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, translated by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969 and 1983); Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994); Sarah C. Maza, *Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-Century France: The Uses of Loyalty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

While largely ignored, this did not stop him from rebuking his fellow architects for disregarding the marks of noble rank and the proprieties of reception. Blondel's concern stemmed from his concern that an owner's social standing was no longer adequately taken into account in the designing of houses.<sup>213</sup> He strongly advocated that residences should match the ranks of nobility, with a prince accommodated in more luxurious surroundings than a marquis, and with non-noble families refraining from emulating the styles of their social superiors. Blondel wrote that '*hôtels* are buildings erected in capital cities where the great noblemen normally take up their residence; the character of their decoration requires a beauty matched to the origins of the titled persons who live in them.'<sup>214</sup> Blondel wrote that architects must assign to each of these buildings a suitable character, which necessarily 'springs from the diversity of ranks and the dignity of these subjects of the King. The rank of the proprietor is thus the source from which the architect should draw the elements of his decoration ... in all cases,

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<sup>213</sup> Some nobles even contested the use of the term *hôtel* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Saint-Simon, in his journals, expressed outrage that a sign 'Hôtel Desmond' had been hung outside the home of a non-noble family. As late as the 1770s, Jacques-François Blondel argued that the term had to be strictly reserved for the titled. However, despite attempts to limit its usage, the term *hôtel* was generally used to refer to any upscale urban house and was not restricted by owners' rank.

<sup>214</sup> Blondel: *Architecture française ou recueil des plans, élévations, coupes et profils des églises, maisons royales, palais, hôtel et édifices les plus considérables de Paris* (Paris: C.A. Jombert, 1752-1756) I:32-38.



building character must be suitable to its residents, thus a social and aesthetic hierarchy, a code of graduated luxury with appropriate decoration.<sup>215</sup> He prescribed specific ways that physical spaces must be differentiated by families' placement in society, using examples such as the Hôtel Béthune-Charost, Noailles, and Uzès, and critiqued the designs of the Hôtel Beaujon, Grimod, and Guimard.<sup>216</sup>

While Blondel published extensively on the subject in the 1760s and 1770s, his fellow architects (many of whom were also his former students) disregarded his pronouncements. The extant buildings that Blondel praised in Academy lectures and publications were the same structures that Le Camus de Mézières, Bélanger, Ledoux, and others were being hired to redesign in the latest styles. Contemporary architects found little to be gained by preserving the status quo that Blondel espoused. To create a market for their work, they needed to build with inventiveness and practicality in mind, finding solutions to their clients' needs. Clients wanted *société* spaces for spontaneous, lively interactions, not the formality and grandeur of the old *parade* rooms; they demanded innovative and exceptional *salons*, *salles*, and *sallettes*. Architects also needed to create a reason for their high-priced

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<sup>215</sup> Blondel (1752): I: 37-43.

<sup>216</sup> In addition to earlier references and the extensive index of Blondel's *Cours d'Architecture*, see Archives Nationales, Série T, *Papiers séquestrés pendant la Révolution* for Uzès (265) and *British Embassy, Paris: The History of a House 1725-1985*: II: 74-128 for Béthune-Charost.

services; their businesses were built on differentiation and reconfigurations. For all of these reasons, Blondel's efforts failed; he was unable to convince other architects to maintain the *parade* style or match their innovations to the social rank of their clients.<sup>217</sup>

### Confiscation and transformation of *ancien régime* spaces

Even at the Hôtel Noailles, long exemplifying the status quo that Blondel praised, delayed but significant changes did arrive. In 1793, a group of architects visited the *hôtel*, tasked with radical redesign.<sup>218</sup> However, the Noailles were not home to

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<sup>217</sup> For examples of these breaks from Blondel's doctrine, see Charles-Etienne Briseux, *Traité du beau essentiel dans les arts: appliqué particulièrement à l'architecture, et démontré physiquement et par l'expérience* (Paris, 1752); Marie-Joseph Peyre, *Oeuvres d'architecture de Marie-Joseph Pierre* (Paris: Prault et Jombert, 1765). For further analysis of this phenomenon, see J. Guillaume, editor, 'On the Transmission of Architectural Theory,' in *Les Traités d'architectures de la Renaissance* (Paris: Picard, 1988): 31-48; Wolfgang Herrmann and A. Zwemmer, *Laugier and Eighteenth Century French Theory* (London, 1962); Joseph Rykwert, *First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980); Alexander Tzonis, *Les Systèmes conceptuels de l'architecture en France de 1650 à 1800* (Paris: CORDA, 1975).

<sup>218</sup> The Hôtel de Noailles remained in grand Louis XIV style even in the late eighteenth century. See the February and September 1779 visits by Jacques Thomas Miller described in Archives Nationales, *Chambre des Bâtiments*, Z/1/J/1045 and Z/1/J/1052, Procès-verbaux des greffiers des Bâtiments.



receive them: they had been arrested earlier that year as enemies of the state (later guillotined).<sup>219</sup> Rather, their client was the new government of France, which had directed them to identify Parisian properties for confiscation. Their mandate was exceptionally broad, not only to examine this grand house on the rue Saint Honoré in the neighbourhood of the Louvre and Tuileries Palaces, but to review thousands of properties in the city.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> See Louise Henriette Duras, *Prison Journals during the French Revolution* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1891) for details of the arrest, including a final testimony and confession given to a priest. The maréchale de Noailles, the duchesse d'Ayen, and the duc de Noailles were executed in 1794 after a ten-month imprisonment. After the Revolution, some remaining members of the Noailles family published survivour accounts that promoted the *ancien régime* as a happier era, including the marquise de Noailles, who wrote the preface to Louis-Mathieu Molé, *Souvenirs de jeunesse 1793-1803* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1991) and Paul Noailles, who wrote *Histoire de madame de Maintenon et des principaux événements du règne de Louis XIV*, 4 volumes (Paris: Comptoir des Imprimeurs-Unis, 1849-1858). Later in the century, the baroness de Noailles prepared the *Memoirs of the Marquise de Montagu* (London: R. Bentley, 1870).

<sup>220</sup> Archives Nationales, Série F, *Versements des Ministères et des Administrations*, F/13/218A, Bâtiments civils et biens nationaux; F/13/324, Bâtiments civils: Plans de bâtiments situés aux environs des Tuileries; F/17/1034, Instruction publique: Commission Temporaire des Arts; F/17/1037, Instruction publique: Objets des arts; F/17/1039B, Instruction publique: Commission Temporaire des Arts; F/17/1074/dossier 6, Laborde: procès-verbeaux de la Commission des Monuments et des tableaux et objets d'art saisis chez les Emigrés et Condamnés et envoyés au Museum Central; Série F, *Versements des Ministères et des Administrations*, F/21/1875, Plans des édifices: l'examen du Conseil des bâtiments civils, An IV; F/21/1991, Bâtiments, An XIX; F/21/\*2470. See also Louis Tuetey, *Procès-verbaux de la*



They were a hastily formed group, brought together primarily for the purpose of nationalising residential properties.<sup>221</sup> Legislative decisions had paved the way for their role: in 1791, the Assembly had ordered the confiscation of properties belonging to enemies of the state. In the following year, *émigrés* were banished from France in perpetuity, and the new government authorised the immediate sale of their residences. In 1793, the laws were further expanded to include anyone who left France without formal approval; even in these cases, properties were ordered for immediate seizure and the death penalty was threatened.<sup>222</sup>

This buildings committee of the Revolutionary era was comprised of several celebrated architects, including Brongniart, Chalgrin, and Rondelet. These *ancien régime* architects had successfully demonstrated their commitment to the republican state; they had survived the dangers of the Revolution and found a

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*Commission des Monuments 1790-94, Collection de la Société d'Histoire de l'Art Français* (Paris: N. Charavay, 1902-1903); *Procès-verbaux de la Commission Temporaire des Arts, Collection des Documents Inédits* (Paris: Imprimerie National, 1912-1917).

<sup>221</sup> While the focus here is limited to residential properties as the site of *salons*, it is important to note that these architects were also responsible for many public projects as detailed in James A. Leith, *Space and Revolution: Projects for Monuments, Squares, and Public Buildings in France 1789-1799* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991) and Werner Szambien, *Les Projets de l'An II: concours d'architecture de la période révolutionnaire* (Paris: Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, 1986).

<sup>222</sup> Série E, *Conseil du Roi*, E/3629, Lois relatives à la vente des domaines nationaux, 1791-1793.

new use for their talents. However, in these positions, they were not hired for their originality and innovation. As their role was to inspect and evaluate Parisian properties, they were required to establish the order of the confiscation of buildings and then organise the Committee's process for conversions, auctions, and liquidations.<sup>223</sup>

Noticeably absent from this Committee were a number of prominent architects who had lost their businesses as a result of the Revolution. Bélanger, renowned in the *ancien régime* for his design of the Pavillon Bagatelle and the Hôtel de Brancas, was arrested in 1793 as an enemy of the state. Similarly, Ledoux was imprisoned for eighteen months, accused of being an accomplice to aristocratic decadence and feeding off the greed of his clients. Faring somewhat better, Ramée escaped from Paris before his impending arrest, finding work outside of France for several years. For these men and others, providing pleasure-filled *salons* was no longer a viable business. However, they could console themselves

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<sup>223</sup> Bernard Bodinier and Eric Teyssier, *L'Événement le plus important de la Révolution, la vente des Biens Nationaux (1789-1867) en France et dans les territoires annexes* (Paris: Société des Etudes Robespierristes, Editions du CTHS, 2000); Charles Pierre Gourlier, *Notice historique sur le service des travaux des bâtiments civils à Paris et dans les départements depuis la création de ce service de l'An IV* (Paris: L. Colas, 1848); Jean Guillaume, *Procès-verbaux du Comité de l'instruction publique de la convention nationale*, 8 volumes (Paris and Montreal: Editions l'Harmattan, 1997-1998); Lauren O'Connell, 'Redefining the Past: Revolutionary Architecture and *Conseils des Bâtiments Civils*,' *Art Bulletin* 77:2 (June 1995): 207-224.

with the knowledge that they had escaped with less harm than a number of their clients, many of whose lives ended at the guillotine.<sup>224</sup>

As a result of these upheavals, the novel architectural forms of pre-1789 Paris underwent significant transformation. No longer distinct for their innovation and creativity, the novel forms of sociability became the *biens nationaux*.<sup>225</sup> More than two hundred meetings later, four thousand properties were nationalised and sold in the city of

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<sup>224</sup> See Jean Stern, *A l'Ombre de Sophie Arnould. François-Joseph Bélanger, architecte des Menus Plaisirs, premier architecte du comte d'Artois* (Paris: Plon, 1930) on Bélanger's arrest. See Michel Gallet, *Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, 1736-1806* (Paris: Picard, 1980) for details of Ledoux's arrest in 1793 for his association with and design work for Parisian nobles. He was also criticised for the continuation of his elite habits, including the employment of a cook, a coachman, and a footman, when others had reduced their household at the start of the Revolution. On the difficulties for Ramée, see Paul Venable Turner, 'Joseph-Jacques Ramée's First Career,' *The Art Bulletin* LXVII:2 (June 1985): 259-275.

<sup>225</sup> Juridiction consulaire, III/1/2/D/4/B/6, Bilans et dossiers de faillite, 1695-1791; D210/719 to 723, Dossiers d'indemnités accordées aux émigrés; D/3/B/6, D/4/B/6 and D/5/B/6, Fichiers des faillites et le fonds du tribunal de commerce; D/11/U/3, D/E/1 and D/E/2, Maisons appartenues à de grandes familles. See Lucien Lazard, *Répertoire alphabétique du fonds des domaines*, 2 volumes (Paris: Imprimerie Chaix, 1904-1917) and Henri Monin et Lucien Lazard, *Sommier des biens nationaux de la Ville de Paris conservé aux Archives de la Seine* (Paris: Ville de Paris, 1920). See DQ13/283 to 292 for lists of individuals' status (émigré, condamné, communauté religieuse), name of acquirer, date of sale, name and profession.



Paris.<sup>226</sup> Auction proceeds were used to prop up the precarious and rapidly changing political leadership. Dozens of structures also became government buildings, their grandeur and monumental size used to house newly set-up ministries and agencies eager to establish their legitimacy.<sup>227</sup> In the case of Vichy du Deffand, her apartment building became a factory for the production and storage of arms.<sup>228</sup> Her cousins' *château*, Chanteloup, was looted and partially burned, with only the *chinoise* pagoda untouched. The house of Geoffrin, which had been inherited by her cousins, was confiscated and sold for national proceeds.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Archives de Paris, Juridiction consulaire, DQ/13/283, Sommier foncier des biens nationaux de la Ville de Paris, Biens nationaux.

<sup>227</sup> Archives Nationales, Série F, *Versements des ministères et des administrations qui en dependent*, F/7, Police générale: Emigrés; F/13, Bâtiments civils: Edifices pris comme bâtiments publics et sièges de services administratifs; F/13/207/28, Etat des Maisons et Bâtiments nationaux occupés par les Corps Administratifs, la Municipalité, les Tribunaux et les Cazernes.

<sup>228</sup> Vichy du Deffand's apartment building was owned by the Filles de Saint-Joseph and became one of the 110 religious communities that were claimed as *biens nationaux*, according to Bodinier and Teyssier, 2000.

<sup>229</sup> Archives Nationales, Série Q, *Biens nationaux et affaires domaniales*, Q/1\*/1099/1 to 10, Registres du Terrier du Roi, 1703-1720; Q/1\*/1099/159, Travail des limites de la ville et des faubourgs; Série Q, *Biens nationaux et affaires domainials*, Q1 for royal properties; Q2 for the administration of biens nationaux; and Q3 for the financial records of this process; especially Q/1/1133/1A, Soumissions pour acquisition de biens nationaux, 1790-1795; Q/2/117-124, Biens nationaux et affaires domainials: procès-verbaux d'estimation. Archives de Paris, IV/2/1/DQ/10, Biens nationaux, 1790-1820, Inventaire sommaire

Through this process of nationalisation and sales, these rooms became deeply politicised, symbols of the events of the 1790s; they became the vigorously contested properties of the *ancien régime*. For years to follow, thousands of families carried intense anger over the full scope of their tragedies: the loss of their family members, properties, and everyday practices.<sup>230</sup> However, it was not until the late years of the Napoleonic era and the early Restoration period that many of these families felt they received some restitution for these events. At that time, many Revolutionary survivors also began to promote their rosy views of pre-Revolutionary life, advocating a return to *ancien régime* systems and values. As part of this process, the *salons* were redefined. In the early nineteenth century, they were transformed from architectural novelties into a particular type of social gathering, one that was characterised by high-minded and elegant exchanges.

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alphabétique; IV/2/11/DQ/10/692, Biens nationaux, assiette des contributions foncière et mobilière, An X-1814; IV/2/12/DQ/10, Biens nationaux et successions de déshérence; séquestres de condamnés; IV/2/13/DQ/10/719, Indemnité accordée aux émigrés, loi du 27 avril 1825.

<sup>230</sup> For examples of some families who sought restitution, see Archives Nationales, Série T, *Papiers séquestrés pendant la Révolution*, Blau (25), Coigny (201), Fitz-James (186), Gouffier (153-157), Javon (60), Laborde (1097), Montholon (115), Montmorency (133), Nicolay (3), Noailles (111), Pointard (26), Roederer (29), Schomberg (8), Trémouille (1051).

## Writing and visualising the *salon* story in the nineteenth century

In the early nineteenth century, some aging academicians promoted an idyllic view of eighteenth-century Parisian life, one specifically associated with the literary world and feminine modes of behaviour. Gabriel Lemonnier, André Morellet, and Jacques Delille were friends who held prominent positions in the state academies of literature and arts before the Revolution and sought out each other's company in the early nineteenth century. All three men had lost their livelihoods during the 1790s and struggled to reclaim their previous positions during the Napoleonic era. Writing at the end of their lives – when they were in their seventies and eighties – they devoted considerable effort to re-establishing their professional legacies and challenging the orthodoxy of their day. They took issue with characterisations of the *ancien régime* as a society that had lacked in literary and artistic sensibilities and had produced only mediocre talent. They countered by providing their perspectives and memories of the decades preceding the 1789 Revolution; through their creative output, they sought to repair this image. They even presented



detailed pictures of refined intellectual sociability, and in the case of Lemonnier and Delille, they placed some of that activity in *salon* rooms. With their portrayals, these individuals sowed the initial seeds of an ideal *salon* institution.

### **Lemonnier and his imagined 1755 gatherings**

In 1814, Lemonnier joined hundreds of other artists presenting pictures at the prestigious biennial exhibition at the Palais Louvre, the official showcase of France's Institute of Painting and Sculpture. Lemonnier knew the process, first competing for inclusion in the high-profile event, and then jostling for preferred placement in the main rooms. That year, however, he had more to worry about than the favouritism of certain Institute jurors. The extreme political upheavals outside the Louvre's doors were certain to reduce attendance and sales. Napoleon's armies were on retreat from the capital; foreign leaders were in charge, with British, Russian, and Austrian forces occupying the city and finalising their war reparations. So severe had the situation become that several artists expected the 1814 show to be cancelled and the state's cultural infrastructure to be disrupted for years to come. For Lemonnier, the situation had the potential to dash his

hopes of returning to prominence as a French painter after nearly twenty years away from the spotlight.<sup>231</sup>

More than four decades prior, Lemonnier had been awarded France's coveted Prix de Rome, the highly sought after prize that honoured the most promising artist in Paris and provided financial support for travel to study Italy's classical heritage. Upon his return from that country, Lemonnier had been elected to the prestigious Academy of Painting and Sculpture and was encouraged to submit his choice of paintings to the celebrated Louvre exhibitions. His early successes led to numerous commissions, including *Les Enfants de Niobé tués par Apollon et Diane*, *Hommage à Louis XVI*, and *Le Génie du Commerce découvrant l'Amérique aux yeux des nations*.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> This exhibition was widely covered in the press as detailed in Richard Wrigley, *The Origins of French Art Criticism: From the Ancien Régime to the Restoration* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). For reviews, see *La Mercure de France* LXI and LXII: 665-667 (1814); *Journal des dames et des modes* 62-63 (1814); *Journal des arts, des sciences, et des Littératures* XIX: 333-335; *Le Moniteur Universel* 337-344 (1814); *La Quotidienne* 169-170 (1814). Udolpho van der Sandt has studied the audiences of the Louvre exhibition and recorded that more than 25,000 visitors attended that year. See 'La Fréquentation des Salons sous l'Ancien Régime, la Révolution, et l'Empire,' *Revue de l'Art* 43 (1986): 43-48. For further discussion of this high-profile exhibition, see Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

<sup>232</sup> Christine Le Bozec, *Lemonnier, un peintre en Révolution* (Mont-Saint-Agnan: Publications de l'Université de Rouen, 2000).

The runaway success of his early years came to an abrupt halt with the Revolutionary upheavals of the 1790s, a tumultuous time from which he never fully recovered. Unable to successfully recreate himself as a Revolutionary artist, or locate new patrons as some of his peers had, he attempted to remake his style to meet the rapidly-changing tastes of the day. When those efforts failed, Lemonnier stopped painting altogether and accepted a curatorial position at the Commission of Monuments.<sup>233</sup> In his new role as conservator of existing works, he devoted his attention to preserving and safeguarding remnants of the past, and by doing so, participating in a larger process of creating an *ancien régime* legacy. He held this position for several years until 1808 when he was appointed director of the Gobelins manufactory, the site of state furniture and tapestry productions.<sup>234</sup>

It was while serving in this position that he

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<sup>233</sup> See Le Bozec (2000) for further discussion of Lemonnier's Revolutionary years and his transition to a curatorial career. Lemonnier joined the Commission of Monuments in 1793, but it is not clear why he was appointed, beyond his willingness to accept the large task of sorting and organising the objects collected during the *biens nationaux* process.

<sup>234</sup> While the post had an illustrious past – Charles Le Brun, Jean-Baptiste Oudry, and others had served as its directors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – the factory had struggled since the 1789 Revolution, having difficulty making the transition from royalist to bonapartist institution. See Antoine-Louis Lacordaire, *Notice sur l'origine et les travaux des manufactures de tapisserie et des tapis réunis aux Gobelins* (Paris, 1852); Henri Harvard and Marius Vachon, *Les manufactures nationales, les Gobelins, la Savonnerie, Sèvres, Beauvais* (Paris, 1889).



began to resurrect his long-dormant painting career. He received one of the many painting commissions being offered to decorate the imperial household of Malmaison, which was being renovated for the use of the Empress Josephine.<sup>235</sup> For the *petite galerie* of this residence, Lemonnier produced a series that celebrated the previous three centuries of French leadership. The first picture, *François Ier recevant dans la salle des Suisses, à Fontainebleau, le tableau de la Sainte Famille, que Raphaël avoit exécuté pour lui*, also named *Siècle de François Ier*, depicted the king and his family with Leonardo de Vinci, Jean Cousin, Jean Goujon, and Sebastiano Serlio, nodding appreciatively at the artistic genius of Raphael; the second picture, *Louis XIV, Dans le Parc de Versailles, à l'inauguration de la Statue de Milon de Crotone par Puget, Siècle de Louis XIV*, displayed the artistic generosity and appreciation of the Bourbon king; and the third painting, *Lecture de la tragédie de l'Orphelin de la Chine, dans le salon de madame Geoffrin, en 1755*, or the *Siècle de Voltaire*, represented a gathering of celebrated eighteenth-century French individuals depicted for posterity assembled around the bust of Voltaire, not unlike worshippers before an image of their deity.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> According to Alain Pougetoux, curator of Malmaison, it is not known why Lemonnier received this commission, but that it is likely that his directorship of the Gobelins manufactory gave him the seniority to request the opportunity and receive a favourable response.

<sup>236</sup> The official exhibition catalogue of 1814 lists these two pictures offered by Anicet-Charles-Gabriel Lemonnier; the third picture in this series, centred around Louis XIV, was not displayed at this time.

At the 1814 Louvre exhibition, Lemonnier chose to exhibit two of these pictures, the *Siècle de François Ier* and the *Siècle de Voltaire*. He had much to say about both pictures, describing them as representing actual events: in one, François I gathered his court to appreciate Raphael's painting and demonstrate that he viewed master artists as his equal; and in the second, a slightly larger group of French elites gathered to applaud Voltaire's artistic and literary genius. Both pictures shared a similar strategy of invention, in which Lemonnier used the meticulous rendering of individuals and a specific setting to present the appearance of having access to actual private conversations. Though represented as historical reality, many who saw the pictures knew they were not historically true and recognised them as imaginary scenes.<sup>237</sup>

Lemonnier used recognisable propagandistic techniques in both paintings, drawing on styles deployed in military works such as *The Battle of Aboukir*, *Napoleon Visiting the Plague Stricken at*

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According to Alain Pougetoux, Conservator at Malmaison, Lemonnier signed and dated the pictures in 1812. All three pictures are now in the collection of the Rouen Museum.

<sup>237</sup> The artist's description for the Louvre *livret* and additional pamphlets emphasised the accuracy of the pictures. For further discussion of contemporary artists who painted works that claimed historical accuracy, despite clear evidence to the contrary, see Michael Marrinan, *Painting Politics for Louis-Philippe: Art and Ideology in Orleanist France, 1830-1848* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Beth Segal Wright, *Painting and History During the French Restoration: Abandoned by the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

*Jaffa*, and *Napoleon's Legion of Famous Writers*. He too glorified French leaders' involvement in public life. However, he broke from that common subject matter, presenting the figures as artistic heroes rather than military men. By doing so, he presented an alternative to his audience. Rather than the common images of chaos and carnage that were ever present in early nineteenth-century France, the observer could connect with a beautiful and tranquil past. By focusing on a message of artistic lineage and great patrimony, Lemonnier was offering paintings and polish instead of battlefields and bloodshed, and thus an altogether different form of French conquest.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Lemonnier did not record a reason for excluding the Louis XIV picture, but one may speculate that he was concerned with overt association with the Bourbons during these highly unstable political times. He may also have believed that Louis XIV was more associated with wars, rather than cultural patronage, and thus the inclusion of this picture could undermine the message that he sought to convey to his audience. The 1814 exhibition tested even the most politically astute artists and the resulting display showed a confusion about the direction of French political leadership and patronage. For further discussion of the artistic themes and controversies of this period, see Marie-Claude Chaudonneret, *L'Etat des artistes: de la restauration à la monarchie de juillet, 1815-1833* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999); Philip Conisbee and Gary Tinterow, editors, *Portraits by Ingres: Image of an Epoch* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Distributed by Harry N. Abrams, 1999); Elizabeth Fraser, *Delacroix, Art, and Patrimony in Post-Revolutionary France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Michael Marrinan, 'Literal/Literary/Lexie: History, Text and Authority in Napoleonic Painting,' *Word and Image* 7:3 (July 1991): 177-200.



Of the two works, it was his *Siècle de Voltaire* [Figure 13] that drew the most considerable attention. In this painting, he represented fifty-four individuals in the spacious reception room of Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin, a noted art collector and a patron of several eighteenth-century artists (including Lemonnier's own former employer and teacher, Vien). From *Encyclopédistes* Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond d'Alembert to renowned writers Pierre de Marivaux and Charles-Pinot Duclos, the mighty and the notorious are lined up. Although already famous in their own right, they were shown in this scene eagerly awaiting a reading of Voltaire's play in 1755. Lemonnier depicted the men decked out in elegant finery, wearing prodigious wigs with fat and springy curls, dressed in velvet waistcoats trimmed with large shiny buttons. Delicate lace shirts froth at their throats and hands, with white stockings and buckled slippers adding polish to their display. The women were similarly portrayed for the occasion, garbed in exquisite fabrics trimmed with ribbons, lace, and golden threads. If their jewels and powdered coiffures nodded to reigning fashions, their facial expressions suggested a seriousness of purpose – this was not simply a sociable evening of light entertainment in comfortable surroundings. With walls adorned by works of Greuze, Vanloo, and Vernet, Lemonnier created a room that was a sort of temple: an ideal site in which the arts and letters of France flourished among the eighteenth-century Parisian elite.

In this carefully-contrived group portrait, Lemonnier constructed a harmonious eighteenth-century metropolitan elite. Differences were downplayed; allegiances to an overarching ideal were emphasised; a perfect model of intellectual sociability and production was promoted. Some individuals known to have been at odds with each other, who indeed could hardly stand the sight of each other, were portrayed here rubbing shoulders. The presence of Rousseau, for example, strikes just one of many false notes (standing in the back near the duc de Choiseul, Raynal, and Vien). By 1755, the philosopher had already been persuaded of high society's corruption and idleness, but here he was shown happily mingling among the crowd. D'Alembert and Clairaut were by that same date trading personal insults in print over differences in mathematical methodologies, but Lemonnier represented them as happy companions. In this composite, they were all obliged to stand side by side. Even the objects so carefully delineated undermine Lemonnier's 1755 dating: Greuze's *Le Fils puni* and *L'accordée de village* and Vien's *Une jeune Grecque*, had not yet been made.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> See Eugène de Buchère de Lepinois, *Notice sur Lemonnier, peintre d'histoire, discours de réception à l'Académie de Rouen* (Rouen: H. Boissel, 1870), for a more thorough discussion of the anachronistic aspects of Lemonnier's painting. See Thomas W. Gaehtgens, *Joseph-Marie Vien, peintre du roi, 1716-1809* (Paris: Association pour la Diffusion de l'Histoire de l'Art, 1988) for discussions of Vien's role as master painter and teacher.

While his creations were recognisable as fabrications, Lemonnier's efforts were initially rewarded.<sup>240</sup> They were well timed with the return of the *ancien régime* leadership. The subject matter particularly resonated with individuals who believed that the previous century embodied refinement, civility, and sophistication. The *salon* image worked well within broader Restoration efforts that depended on sanitised stories of the earlier era. Following his 1814 exhibition, Lemonnier regained his seat in the Academy in the first year of the restored monarchy.<sup>241</sup>

However, while it appeared then that Lemonnier could burnish his legacy and secure his place in France's artistic heritage, his position was short-lived. After a brief period of artistic recognition, his earlier political allegiance resulted in the loss of his post in the state's artistic infrastructure. During that later round of Restoration purges, Lemonnier was deemed to have been too closely aligned with the Napoleonic

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<sup>240</sup> See reviews in *Journal des arts, des sciences, et des littératures* XIX: 333-335; *Le Moniteur Universel* 337-344 (1814); *La Quotidienne* 169-170 (1814) which describe the work as a product of Lemonnier's imagination.

<sup>241</sup> See *Les Années romantiques: la peinture française de 1815 à 1850* (Paris: Société Française de Promotion Artistique, 1995) and Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) for discussions of the Restoration paintings that portrayed the preoccupations of inheritance, lineage, heritage, and authority. For an analysis of these themes considered important by early nineteenth-century historians, see Jean Walch, *Les Maîtres de l'histoire, 1815-1850: Augustin Thierry, Mignet, Guizot, Thiers, Michelet, Edgard Quinet* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1986).



government, having worked in that era's artistic administration and carried out commissions for Napoleon's family. Le baron des Retours, a close supporter of the Bourbons, was named as Lemonnier's replacement at the Gobelins. Without a secure place in the new regime, he again struggled to maintain his place in France's artistic community. While his pictures were well-received by many Parisians, art critics and connoisseurs were less complimentary about his skills and talent. His work did not remain on the walls of the Louvre, the ultimate test of a French artist's worthiness.<sup>242</sup>

One avenue, however, did prove successful.

The renowned engraver Debucourt (another favoured *ancien régime* artist) made an aquatint of *Siècle de Voltaire* and had the image published in *Le Figaro Illustré*.<sup>243</sup> Laure Junot also reproduced the image in her *Histoire des salons* in 1836, later republished in 1893. Marguerite-Virginie Ancelot emulated the composition and style in her *salon* paintings reproduced in *Un Salon de Paris. 1824 à 1864*, published in 1866. It was this rosy view of *ancien régime* society that came to represent a powerful

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<sup>242</sup> The picture has not appeared in art historical publications nor in exhibitions of Restoration era images such as *Les années romantiques* held at the Grand Palais, Paris. Even encyclopedic catalogues such as *La peinture française*, under the direction of former Louvre director Pierre Rosenberg (2001), have omitted the work.

<sup>243</sup> See the Debucourt chronology published in the biography of Roger-Armand Weigert, *Debucourt: Modes et manières du jour à la fin du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle et au commencement du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Rombaldi 1957).

ideal, one that was consistently reprinted and drew attention to Lemonnier's image. Via this unintended path, Lemonnier achieved the longevity he had sought. His initial fiction of a *salon* gathering, repeated in multiple outlets, ultimately became a central representation of eighteenth-century Parisian life, even later accepted as historical reality. His painting depicted one particular eighteenth-century *salon* room, one that served as an important bridge between the architectural novelty known to the previous era and the emergence of a cultural story about the *salon* institution as an ideal type of intellectual gathering of the *ancien régime*.<sup>244</sup>

### **Morellet and Delille's odes to pre-Revolutionary lives**

André Morellet, who had known Lemonnier for decades, shared a similar sense of loss during the Revolutionary upheavals. Earlier in his career, Morellet was recognised for his *Reflexions sur les avantages de la liberté d'écrire et d'imprimer*

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<sup>244</sup>Historians have repeatedly published the image. John Merriman selected the Lemonnier image for *The History of Modern Europe*, and described it as a representation of an actual *salon* of the Enlightenment. Lynn Hunt, in *The Challenge of the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) displays a large colour reproduction of this picture in the chapter on the eighteenth century, accompanied by a lengthy description of *salons* as places of intellectual conversation and havens from royal court society. Relegated to the photo credits of these publications, in back-page appendices, is an essential detail about this picture: the 1812 date of its production, nearly six decades after the gathering supposedly occurred.



*sur les matières de l'administration* and his translation of Thomas Jefferson's writings. His talents were rewarded with a seat at the French Academy, one which he subsequently lost during the Revolution. He referred to that period as a 'very painful' time, during which he witnessed the confiscation and destruction of homes and properties, a volatile era when masses of people became a 'blind force without brakes'.<sup>245</sup> He wrote of his experience in the town of Tulle, at the request of the bishop of Chartres, and how these months strongly reinforced his opinion against the Revolution. Becoming increasingly upset, he wrote of how he felt forced to leave his homeland, not wanting to witness any further acts of violence and destruction.<sup>246</sup>

Later returning to France, he joined the effort, already begun by Lemonnier and others, to preserve his country's past. He concentrated on safeguarding the Academy's archives, worked on the further development of the Academy's dictionary, and became a chronicler of the 'lost world of the *ancien régime*'. He prepared such works as the four-volume *Mélanges de littérature et de philosophie* (1818), a compendium of eighteenth-

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<sup>245</sup> André Morellet, *Mémoires inédits de l'abbé Morellet, de l'Académie Française, sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la Révolution*, edited by Pierre-Edouard Lemontey, 2 volumes (Paris: Ladvocat, 1821): II: 12.

<sup>246</sup> André Morellet, *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin* (Paris: H. Nicolle, 1812), which also contains his 'A la mémoire de Madame Geoffrin' given in 1777: 77-100; *Mémoires inédits de l'abbé Morellet, de l'Académie Française, sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la Révolution*, edited by Pierre-Edouard Lemontey, 2 volumes (Paris: Ladvocat, 1821): II: 4-15.



century literary pieces, and essays such as *De la conversation* (1812) which focused on the elements necessary for ideal sociability. In his view, it was critical that Parisians maintain an environment where elegant conversation could flourish as conversation provided the 'trial' to test an idea as well as the means to sharpen judgment and memory. He went on to claim that France had been the most sociable nation in Europe in the eighteenth century, creating men of rare talent such as Buffon, Diderot, and l'abbé Galiani. He noted that American diplomat Benjamin Franklin had also complimented Frenchmen, praising their ability to know just 'what you are asking ... picking up the details and circumstances (that) convey the most important (information).' However, Morellet believed that this ideal sociability had lost, in large part due to the new government that did not allow similar men to develop. Therefore, Morellet worried that France would never be able to return to a peaceful era of *grande politesse*.<sup>247</sup>

Frustrated with those individuals who sought to portray pre-1789 life as corrupt, he considered himself as part of the necessary defense against such lies, and as an important champion of neglected philosophy and literature. This trend, he argued, was worsened by the recent publication of the private letters of dissolute characters who were not representative of this

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<sup>247</sup> See André Morellet, 'De la Conversation', in *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin* (Paris: H. Nicolle, 1812): 157-163, 184-185, 223-226.

earlier society. In his estimation, the bawdy activities described in some letters were not representative of *ancien régime* practices but were the improprieties of a few. Instead of focusing on the debauched and frivolous, he proposed other characters as role models, worthy of emulation, because of their consistent high moral codes. In his view, some eighteenth-century women had lived exceptionally virtuous lives.<sup>248</sup>

At the time that Lemonnier was completing his Voltaire painting, Morellet was putting the finishing touches on his own eighteenth-century story, *Eloge de Madame Geoffrin*, and preparing his memoirs, *Mémoires sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la Révolution; précédés de l'éloge de l'abbé Morellet* (published posthumously in 1821). Like his friend, he promoted a view of *ancien régime* as both a better time for the artistic community, and as an overall more prosperous and civilised society, evidenced by the type of elegant sociability that he facilitated at his home on the first Sunday of every month. He presented detailed pictures of the refined gatherings he memorialised from the eighteenth century, and specifically cited and complimented sociability in the homes

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<sup>248</sup> André Morellet, *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin* (Paris: H. Nicolle, 1812); *Mémoires inédits de l'abbé Morellet, de l'Académie Française, sur le dix-huitième siècle et sur la Révolution*, edited by Pierre-Edouard Lemontey, 2 volumes (Paris: Ladvocat, 1821): especially 17-19, 48-49, 121-131, 139-141.

of the Geoffrins, H  lvetius, Holbach, Neckers, Saurins, and Suards.<sup>249</sup>

Above all else, Morellet glorified the conversation of eighteenth-century gatherings, declaring this as the noblest faculty, one that *ancien r  gime* individuals enjoyed and perfected as an art.

Morellet described how conversation became the ultimate activity, 'the great school of the mind', that led participants to become greater thinkers. Within a context of strict etiquette and mixed-gender sociability, Morellet argued that rarefied conversation even 'led the human race to enlightenment and happiness'.<sup>250</sup> In Morellet's view, the French engaged in the most sophisticated and elegant *bons mots*, writing there was 'better conversation in France than in any other country in the world'.<sup>251</sup> While he did not label the eighteenth-century gatherings as *salons*, their characterisations have since been used as evidence of the *salon* world.

The passion these two men had for the habits of the *ancien r  gime* was shared by their mutual friend, Jacques Delille. Like Lemonnier and Morellet, Delille had achieved early success.<sup>252</sup> His translations of Virgil in 1769 were so well received

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<sup>249</sup> Morellet, *M  moires in  dits de l'abb   Morellet* (1821) 1: 119-129.

<sup>250</sup> Morellet (1821): 158.

<sup>251</sup> Morellet (1821): 162.

<sup>252</sup> Maurice Henri  t, *Jacques Delille, jug   par ses contemporains d'apr  s des documents in  dits* (Le Havre, 1914); Edouard Guitton, *Jacques Delille, 1738-1813, et le po  me de la nature en France de 1750    1820* (Lille: Service de Reproduction des Th  ses de l'Universit  , 1976): especially 11-38.



that they paved the way for a position in the Academy. A chair in poetry at the Collège de France, under the patronage of the comte d'Artois, soon followed. During the Revolutionary years, though, his life also proved very difficult. A brief imprisonment was followed by a decade wandering Europe in search of work, including stays in London, the Rhineland, and Switzerland. While in Switzerland, he prepared his *Malheur et Pitié*, a poem expressing his great sadness over the state of his homeland, destroyed by war and afflicted by ill-will. In his first *chant*, Delille set out the problems of contemporary France, which he defined as a gross lack of compassion, charity, and goodness; he heard only cries of unhappiness and pain, and felt overwhelmed by barbarous action, destruction, torture, crime, and suffering. In short, France only knew *leur misère*. In the second *chant*, though, Delille held out hope for a return to peace and prosperity, describing how justice, humanity, and happiness might again be achieved. Delille praised the work of religion to offer divine rescue to those whose actions had been cruel or criminal. He called on his fellow countrymen to offer compassion to all Frenchmen, including those who were in exile. He compared them to Odysseus who spent 10 years trying to get home, not motivated by glory or gold, but rather a man who held noble aspirations and a courageous heart.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> See 'Malheur et Pitié' in Jacques Delille, *Oeuvres de J. Delille* (Paris: L.G. Michaud, 1824): 450-457.

Delille returned to France in 1801, citing his desire to spend his last days in his own country. He reclaimed his academic position, giving frequent lectures on poetry and verse. At this time, like Lemonnier and Morellet, Delille began to see a glimmer of hope, a chance that he might achieve his old glory. Delille's position did improve during the Napoleonic era, and he was successful in regaining his Sorbonne post. The possible resurgence of the Bourbon leadership offered even greater possibility for this poet of *ancien régime* fame. A return to the monarchy, as Delille advocated in his writings, would be a constructive force in shaping his legacy, rather than a taint with which he had been living.<sup>254</sup>

It was his last work, *La Conversation* (Paris, 1812), which served as his most significant ode to pre-Revolutionary life.<sup>255</sup> At one hundred and fifty-eight pages, and in three separate parts, Delille presented the importance of reviving the ideal sociability of France's past. Delille first set out to establish that men were distinguished from creatures through their gift of sociability, of which 'conversation was the symbol of this perfectibility'. He elaborated on this idea by describing a link between *ancien régime* France and ancient Greece, noting that

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<sup>254</sup> See Guitton, 1976: 374-382 for Delille's return home, further discussion of Delille's nostalgia for the *ancien régime*, and his attempts to develop the themes of monarchy, religion, and moral values.

<sup>255</sup> Jacques Delille, *La Conversation: poème en trois chants* (Paris: Michaud Frères, 1812).

these two societies stood out in history for their accomplishments in sociability and conversation, claiming each as a paradise of the past. Delille explained how both nations held *salons* where conversations provided hope, cheer, and a noble manner. He noted how each included men and women which ensured that topics were not too serious and ranged far beyond the subject of politics and war.<sup>256</sup>

Delille claimed direct involvement and participation in these gatherings, even presenting his own *salon* where he had taken centre stage. He described how his *salon*, a word interchanged with *foyer*, had brought people together for *bons mots*. In this setting, French people stopped talking about war and became relaxed. He compared his gathering to the *salon* room of ancient Athenian goddess Aspasia where the grand society of 'toute la Grèce' had met.<sup>257</sup> In the third *chant*, he even offered an autoportrait, a description of himself as the ideal conversationalist. He went on to present his own vignettes of his earlier life, describing social gatherings both remembered and imagined.

Published the year before his death at the age of 73, *La Conversation* capped a tumultuous and by then fading career.<sup>258</sup> At the book's end, it also referenced Morellet's work as an important and commendable effort to present an accurate view of

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<sup>256</sup> Jacques Delille, *Oeuvres choisies de Delille*. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1850): especially 221-228.

<sup>257</sup> Delille (1850): 233-234.

<sup>258</sup> Guitton (1974): 540-547.



*ancien régime* society. It gave a particular form to a type of eighteenth-century sociability, one represented visually by Lemonnier and hinted at by Morellet but never defined. While Morellet had memorialised the elegance of dinner parties, Delille had referred to literary gatherings in a *salon* room (and also a *foyer* room). Living in the nineteenth century, Delille looked back to his eighteenth-century life and claimed knowledge of, participation in, and even centralisation in a room he called a *salon*.<sup>259</sup>

In the active imagination of these three men, plays, poetry, and paintings were the basis for the gatherings of the *ancien régime*'s capital elite. Lemonnier, Morellet, and Delille set out the early ingredients of the *salon* ideal as formal gatherings of pre-Revolutionary Paris. Their converging visions and memories emerged out of nostalgia, legacy, and contemporary political partisanship. Their circa 1814 works explicitly sought to counter the view that *ancien régime* life had been corrupt and dissolute. They presented a story of high-minded sociability, civilised behaviour, and artistic sensibilities. These stories challenged anti-aristocratic rhetoric, and were given further momentum by the Bourbon monarchy's return to power. After losing so much during the Revolution, they stood to gain much by the possible return of the Bourbon leadership and lifestyle. Creating this particular kind

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<sup>259</sup> See the introduction of Louis Audiat, *Un poète abbé Jacques Delille, 1738-1813* (Paris: A. Savaète, 1905), which also describes an éloge to Delille that was read at the Académie Française on September 8, 1854 describing him as a hero who survived the barbarism of the Revolution.

of *ancien régime* history – a *salon* story – provided an opportunity to return to a way of life that they continued to cherish and value, while serving as a means to end their careers on high notes.

Their defenses of eighteenth-century practices included remaking dinner parties into *salons* and promoting the idea that eighteenth-century society was exceptional. It is their representations of the *ancien régime* that came to be accepted by some who promoted a romanticised view. Even though their writings of circa 1814 contradicted their pre-1789 writings, as well as the documents left behind by others, their views came to be widely accepted.<sup>260</sup> In the earliest portrayals, wistful 'remembrances' described the greater refinement and elegance of the earlier era. From there, the stories became more specific and elaborate, ultimately inspiring the creation of specific stories of imagined gatherings.

Explicitly bringing these elements together, Johann Cotta published a synthesis of these three men's views in his book, *Almanach des Dames*. Cotta reproduced Delille's *De la Conversation* poem on the *salon* room, referred to Morellet's 1812 book, included some letters written by Marie Vichy du Deffand, and then presented a synthesis of the ideal eighteenth-century

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<sup>260</sup> On extensive discussions of these contradictions, see Dorothy Medlin and Jeffrey Merrick, editors, *André Morellet (1727-1819) in the Republic of Letters and the French Revolution* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995), referenced earlier in Section 2, and Guitton (1976): especially Chapters 1 and 2.

gathering. Unveiling a portrait of an ideal eighteenth-century *salon*, Cotta illustrated his story with portraits of two women: Marie Vichy du Deffand and Marie-Thérèse Geoffrin, whom he credited with *salon* leadership [Figures 14 and 15]. He presented these two women as remarkably similar, even making their names phonetically comparable through truncation, referring to them simply as Madame du Deffand and Madame Geoffrin. He presented pictures of them and described how their physiognomy matched their merit and spirit, with Vichy du Deffand characterised by charm of conversation and finesse, and Geoffrin as embodying simplicity and perfect reason. While he noted just slight differences between them, he wrote that 'it seems to those who saw both, that one was promised more agreement in the interactions' of Vichy du Deffand but 'given more confidence' by Geoffrin. In Cotta's often republished almanac, the two women were identified as the founding sisters of the modern French nation.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Johann Cotta, editor, *Almanach des dames, pour l'an 1813* (Paris and Fuchs: Levrault Frères, 1813): especially 6-12; *Almanach des dames* (Paris and Fuchs: Levrault Frères, 1823, 1825, 1826, 1833, 1836); Daniel Moran, *Toward the Century of Words: Johann Cotta and the Politics of the Public Realm in Germany, 1795-1832* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). Moran's book is very thorough on the publications of Cotta, his political journalism, and cultural entrepreneurship. However, it does not analyse Cotta's series of almanacs which included more than forty periodicals on such subjects as astronomy and horse-breeding.



## Bringing the story into practice: Junot and Ancelot

Throughout the nineteenth century, various writers of differing political leanings were drawn to the story of the *salon*. Some who found themselves on the wrong side of the political aisle were particularly eager to take up *ancien régime* sensibilities to demonstrate their acceptance of their country's leadership transition. Laure Junot, who carried the title of the duchesse d'Abrantès from her marriage to a decorated general of Napoleon's wars, disavowed her previous political affiliations and devoted herself to the Louis XVIII régime. As part of her efforts, she wrote a series of books on the glory of eighteenth-century France in which she detailed the political prowess of Louis XVIII's older brother, Louis XVI, as well as the exceptional character of court society, tragically destroyed by the zealots who led the French Revolution.<sup>262</sup>

In her *Histoire des salons*, Junot held up the *salon* as a specific vehicle for this return to *ancien régime* sensibilities. In this six-volume series, she went beyond simply recording her perspective on the past by presenting a call for action; she called for a resurrection of good manners, exquisite taste, and sparkling

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<sup>262</sup> Laure-Adelaide-Constance Permon Junot, duchesse d'Abrantès, *Mémoires de madame la duchesse d'Abrantès ou souvenirs historiques sur Napoléon, la Révolution, le Directoire, le Consulat, L'Empire, et la Restauration*, 18 volumes (Paris: Ladvocat, 1831-1835): especially her introduction which sets out her reasons for writing her memoirs.

conversation. Junot demanded her readers' attention and action on this serious matter, calling on them to save the old places of the past, and to remember how beautiful and tranquil they had once been. She urged Parisian society to place a premium on the physical settings of the *ancien régime*, and to restore them to their former glory. In calling for a resurrection of this lost world of France, she hoped to gather the most elegant and refined individuals of the nation to re-establish polite society. Recreating these elegant evenings and places would provide a connection to their ancestors; the physical remnants of this past society would serve as the elements for its social revival.<sup>263</sup>

In *Histoire des salons* (1836) and *Mémoires* (1835-1836), Laure Junot set out to persuade that it was not simply enough to admire the eighteenth-century *salon*; her readers ought to emulate it. She made a case for reintroducing the formal reception spaces of the *ancien régime* so that large gatherings could once again be held for the purposes of developing France's social and cultural civilisation. Indeed, she wrote of how she had already undertaken these efforts, and described how she had

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<sup>263</sup> Laure-Adelaide-Constance Permon Junot, duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des salons de Paris, tableaux et portraits du grand monde sous Louis XVI, le Directoire, le Consulat et L'Empire, la restauration et le règne de Louis-Philippe Ier*, 6 volumes (Paris: Ladvocat, 1836); translated into German as *Die Salons von Paris* (Quedlinburg: G. Basse, 1837-1839); *Mémoires sur la Restauration ou souvenirs historiques sur cette époque, la Révolution de Juillet (1830) et les premières années du règne de Louis Philippe Ier*, 6 volumes (Paris: J.K. Henry, 1835-1836): I: 48-49, 72, 263; II: 18; III: 99; IV: 18, 133-141.

created a *salon* that provided an oasis in a Parisian society that had otherwise become odious. Her efforts focused on her attempts to recreate such a place, how to turn *ancien régime* sensibilities (as she saw them) into *nouvelle régime* mores. Believing that it held important secrets to good living and noble behaviour, she went into great detail about her efforts to study the eighteenth century. In recreating such an elegant place, which had given her the great pleasure of establishing a connection to her ancestors, she believed others would find highly similar satisfaction.<sup>264</sup>

Junot's story was deeply influenced by the nostalgic creations of Lemonnier, Morellet, Delille, and others. Her accounts were accompanied by a particular nineteenth-century image – the print of Lemonnier's *Siècle de Voltaire*, which she described as a reminder and symbol of the eighteenth century. Junot repeated some of the passages wherein Morellet described eighteenth-century sociability and refined conversation. Junot also reiterated Delille's 1812 story of Aspasia's *salon* in ancient Greece, and even claimed that she patterned her own *salon* after that elegant woman, thus crediting herself with bringing a high-minded Athenian spirit to the capital.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Laure-Adelaide-Constance Permon Junot, duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des salons de Paris, tableaux et portraits du grand monde sous Louis XVI, le Directoire, le Consulat et L'Empire, la restauration et le règne de Louis-Philippe Ier*, 6 volumes (Paris: Ladvocat, 1836-1838): IV: 54-69.

<sup>265</sup> Visitors to Junot's *salon* included François-Auguste-René Chateaubriand, marquis de Custine, Anaïs Lebrun, madame Noailles, and



The repetition and elaboration of Junot's *salon* story fit into her larger study of *ancien régime* life, which she believed the Revolution had devastated. She condemned the Revolutionaries for destroying the fabric of French society and establishing policies that undermined and divided French families. Men were forced to fight or flee; women and children were left to fend for themselves in the face of insurmountable obstacles. Regarding her own immediate family, she wrote of its financial devastation, of her father's forced emigration to London, and of her solitary confinement in a Parisian school when her mother left for the provinces. Junot described her father's role as a tax farmer in Louis XVI's government and how this led to trouble in the Revolutionary era, and that as a small child, she had been shut up in the family's *hôtel* on the quai Conti, overlooking the Seine, not allowed to venture past the family courtyard. Junot showed her mixed feelings of anxiety and relief upon returning to Paris in the mid-nineties and her immense disappointment that their family home had been lost.<sup>266</sup>

Like Lemonnier, Morellet, and Delille, Junot blamed the Revolutionaries for her difficulties in the early years of

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Juliette Récamier. See Comtesse Dash, *Mémoires des Autres*, 6 volumes (Paris: Librairie Illustrée, 1896-1898): IV: 225-229. See Mireille de Mongival, *L'Hôtel d'Abrantès* (Paris: Société Générale d'Impressions et d'Editions, 1911) for an analysis of the building where these gatherings were held.

<sup>266</sup> Laure-Adelaide-Constance Permon Junot, duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoires contemporaines*, 2 volumes (Paris: Dumont, 1835): I: 10-32.

the nineteenth century. Her interest in and elaboration of the *salon* story stemmed directly from the troubles she faced after the fall of the Bourbon monarchy. Taking up an analysis of the Napoleonic and Restoration eras, again through the lens of her tumultuous personal life, Junot documented the problems she believed these leaders created. She described how she and her husband were driven out of Paris, sent to Portugal as a result of Napoleon's territorial ambitions on the Iberian Peninsula. It was not an appointment that Junot accepted well, writing 'there are no options, save for death when one enters this country ... years passed slowly in this foreign place'.<sup>267</sup> Junot wrote that she waited eagerly for news that they could return to France. The relocation order finally arrived, but it failed to meet her hopes: Junot would return to Paris, but her husband had been commanded to lead campaigns along the Russian front.

Junot detailed her immense disappointment upon returning to the capital, as she found herself displaced socially. Upon her husband's death in 1813, her situation deteriorated further. Left to cope with his enormous debt, her requests for governmental relief were denied and she received only a small annual allowance of 6,000 francs as a widower's pension for her husband's years of military service. The funds fell far short of the amount she needed to cover her husband's liabilities, and she

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<sup>267</sup> Laure-Adelaide-Constance Permon Junot, duchesse d'Abrantès, *Souvenirs d'une ambassade et d'un séjour en Espagne et en Portugal de 1808 à 1811*, 2 volumes (Paris: Ollivier, 1839): I:18.

described this as yet another instance of the miserly Napoleonic government.

Napoleon's advisor, the duc de Rovigo, was charged with settling her husband's financial affairs; the outcome was not favourable for his widow Junot. Rovigo ordered her to sell her Champs-Élysées *hôtel* and all of its contents, use the proceeds to pay the most pressing debts, and leave Paris as soon as possible. Fortunately for Junot, the political and military chaos of Paris 1814 overtook Rovigo's efforts and gave Junot a brief respite. Rather than losing her *hôtel*, her home became a gathering place, first for the invading Prussians and English (of whom she complained bitterly), but later for the growing numbers of Bourbonists who were amassing in the capital. Her efforts and hospitality were well rewarded. Despite her husband's allegiance to Napoleon during most of his reign, Louis XVIII accepted her claims of being a Bourbon champion, personally receiving her at court and even arranging to cover some of her family's outstanding debts.<sup>268</sup>

Prince Klemens von Metternich, Austrian statesman and *ancien régime* restorer, in a letter to his wife, described Junot as entirely dismissive of Napoleon's efforts to restore his

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<sup>268</sup> See Comte Rodolphe Apponyi, *Vingt-cinq ans à Paris (1826-1850)*, *Journal du comte Rodolphe Apponyi, attaché de l'ambassade d'Autriche à Paris*, 4 volumes (Paris: Plon-Nourrit et Cie, 1926): III: 288-292.



government, labelling her as a 'royaliste enragée'.<sup>269</sup> Junot later wrote fondly of her friendship with Metternich and her expanded Bourbonist circle, describing how she opened her home as a place of healing and restoration for French men and women, 'a hospital where one saw the wounded from all armies'.<sup>270</sup> In her remaining years, Junot was committed to promoting the Bourbon cause. Raised in a prominent *ancien régime* family, she put forward a spirited defense of the pre-Revolutionary lifestyle and its ways. In her view, only a strong monarchy could help her country to overcome its tragic past. It was the Bourbons who offered the possibility of returning to the stability, order, and affluence that had been destroyed by the Revolutionary upheavals.

This view was favourably received by a large number of Junot's readers. She became well recognised as a chronicler of Parisians' past, as one who provided a first-hand perspective of a rarefied world.<sup>271</sup> She became a prolific author,

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<sup>269</sup> Prince Klemens von Metternich, July 22, 1815 in G. de Bertier de Sauvigny, *Metternich et Decazes d'après leur correspondance, 1816-1820* (Paris, 1953): 42.

<sup>270</sup> Junot (1836): II: 18.

<sup>271</sup> For examples of the acceptance of Junot's stories in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Catherine Mary Charlton Bearne, *Heroines of French Society in the Court, the Revolution, the Empire and the Restoration* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1907); Jules Bertaut, *La duchesse d'Abrantès* (Paris: Flammarion, 1949); Robert Chantemesse, editor, *The Secret Memoirs of the Duchesse d'Abrantès, 1784-1838*, translated by Eric Sutton (New York, 1928); Edmond Géraud, *Un Témoin de Deux Restaurations: fragmens du journal intime* (Paris, 1892); Joseph Turquan, *La Générale Junot, duchesse d'Abrantès*

publishing an eighteen-volume memoir of her life, a six-volume history of the Restoration, her Paris journals of 1812-1813, and novels such as *L'Amirante de Castille*. She produced shorter articles in *Le Journal des Gens du Monde*, alongside the work of Victor Hugo, François-Auguste-René Chateaubriand, and Alexandre Dumas as well as essays for the leading publications of *La Revue de Paris* and *Journal Critique politique et littéraire*. Over the course of just seven years, she published a shelf's full: fifty-seven books.<sup>272</sup>

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*d'après ses lettres, ses papiers, et son 'Journal Intime' inédits* (Paris: A. Tallandier, 1914). For examples of the acceptance of the broader story of the *salon*, see Théodore Aynard, *Les Salons d'autrefois, souvenirs de 1828 à 1848* (Lyon: Mougin-Rusand, 1887); Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm, *Les Salons de Paris* (Paris, 1877); Théophile Lavallée, *Histoire de Paris* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1857); Anaïs Lebrun, comtesse de Bassanville, *Les Salons d'autrefois. Souvenirs intimes par madame la comtesse de Bassanville* (Paris: P. Brunet, 1862); Marquis de Pierre Marie Maurice Henri Ségur, *Esquisses et récits* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1908); *Gens d'autrefois* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1903); *Silhouettes historiques* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1911); *Vieux dossiers; petits papiers* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1913).

<sup>272</sup> For example, see Laure-Adelaide-Constance Permon Junot, duchesse d'Abrantès, *L'Amirante de Castille*, 2 volumes (Paris: Mame-Delaunay, 1832); *Hedwige, reine de Pologne* (Paris: Dumont, 1833); *Blanche*, 2 volumes (Brussels: Meline, Cans et Cie, 1839); *Catherine II* (Paris: Dumont, 1834); *Scènes de la vie espagnole*, 2 volumes (Paris: Dumont, 1836); *La Duchesse de Vallombray*, 2 volumes (Paris: C. Lachapelle, 1838); *La Vallée des Pyrénées* (Brussels: 1838); *L'Exile: une rose au désert*, 2 volumes (Paris: Dumont, 1838); *Églantine*, 2 volumes (Paris, 1839); *Louise*, 2 volumes (Paris: Dumont, 1839); *Les Deux soeurs, scènes de la vie intérieur*, 2 volumes (Paris: C. Lachapelle, 1840);



reviewed Junot's work, writing that 'there are few readers who will not be taken by the style of this woman who has applied herself to such serious matters', commending her work as an important contribution to the truth of history and the beauty of literature. The *Revue britannique* described Junot as a 'starry jewel ... who has just risen on the literary horizon of France, after a long reign as an autocrat of beauty and style, producing a book that was being read with eagerness'.<sup>273</sup>

By the end of her life, Junot felt that the record was finally set straight, and the horrific actions of the Revolutionaries had been made known. Republicans' claims were revealed for what she believed they were: complete fabrications. Junot was praised for her efforts to re-establish the facts for setting 'nothing forward without proof' and for even being so forgiving that she called for 'recrimination of no one', regardless of their past behaviour, writing that 'she [would] be content to re-establish the facts and nothing [would] be set forward without written proof'.<sup>274</sup>

Her efforts to resurrect and promote the eighteenth-century *salon* were central to the positive reception that she received. Fellow writers, including Honoré de Balzac, François-

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*Etienne Saunier, roman historique*, 2 volumes (Paris: C. Lachapelle, 1840).

<sup>273</sup> *Le Journal des Débats*, May 16, 1830; *Revue britannique ou choix d'articles traduits des meilleur écrits périodiques de la Grande-Bretagne* VIII (Paris: April 1834): 357-368.

<sup>274</sup> *Le Journal des Débats*, May 16, 1830.



Auguste de Chateaubriand, Alexandre Dumas, and Victor Hugo, complimented her on these efforts and became her close friends. When Junot died, Dumas gave a eulogy at her funeral, Chateaubriand walked behind her coffin, and Hugo secured a plot at the Montmartre cemetery. Her son Napoléon Andoche Junot, duc d'Abrantès, then took up her cause, producing his own romanticised views of eighteenth-century *salons* for *Les Boudoirs et Paris*, published a few years after her death. Paul Thiébault wrote that 'she was the best of everything our country could produce – friendly, lettered, and brilliant – hers was one of the finest *salons* in Paris transported into the middle of a population which lived in the past'.<sup>275</sup>

Marguerite-Virginie Ancelot was one of many women who took up Junot's call for the recreation of *salons*. Ancelot explained that she too had consciously modelled herself on the eighteenth-century *salon* hostess in her *hôtel* on the rue de Seine, and that she believed that *salons* provided the foundation for a happy society.<sup>276</sup> In her estimation, *salons* were like brilliant parties, where you find good friends, youth, and a 'perpetual

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<sup>275</sup> See Junot's obituaries in *Journal des Débats*, June 13, 1838; *Le Spectateur Universel*, June 9, 1838; *The Times*, June 11, 1834: 388. Napoléon Andoche Junot, duc d'Abrantès, *Les Boudoirs et Paris, par le duc d'Abrantès*, 6 volumes (Paris: C. Lachapelle, 1844-1846); Général Baron Thiébault, *Mémoires du général baron Thiébault, 1792-1820*, 5 volumes (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit et Cie, 1893-95); IV: 433.

<sup>276</sup> Marguerite-Virginie Ancelot, *Un Salon de Paris. 1824 à 1864* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1866): 12-16, 29, 37, 72.

theatre where the same comedy of pleasures, vanities, interests, and passions are always playing; nothing changes ... exception the actors'.<sup>277</sup> A writer and painter, Ancelot devoted herself to the *salon* institution for four decades and included several of Junot's friends – Victor Hugo, Sophie Gay, Juliette Récamier, and François-Auguste-René Chateaubriand – in her gatherings. Ancelot also became devoted to the restoration of *ancien régime* buildings in the nineteenth century and specifically cited the importance of recapturing the physical embodiment of Rambouillet's first, great seventeenth-century *salon*.<sup>278</sup>

She even made paintings of these gatherings. In doing so, she recorded her *salon* setting for posterity, images which she reproduced in her *salon* memoirs, *Un salon de Paris*, along with descriptions of these evenings. Her first painting, completed in 1824, represented Parceval de Grandmaison reading his poetry on Philippe-Auguste, one which she referred to as a *lecture*. [Figure 16]. Far from original, this work imitated the

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<sup>277</sup> Ancelot (1866): 22.

<sup>278</sup> Marguerite-Virginie Ancelot, *Un Salon de Paris. 1824 à 1864* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1866): 15-16; *Les Salons de Paris, foyers éteints* (Paris: J. Tardieu, 1858). Ancelot's literary works, in which she attributed some of their success to their *salon* presentation, included *Emérance*, 2 volumes (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1842); *Gabrielle*, 2 volumes (Paris: Ambroise Dupont, 1839 and Charles Gosselin, 1840); *Médérine*, 2 volumes (Paris: Berquet et Pétion, 1843). For further discussion of Ancelot's *salons*, see Sophie Marchal, 'Les Salons de la Restauration', in *La Vie romantique*, actes du colloque du Musée de la vie romantique et de la Sorbonne des 5-6 juin 2000, edited by André Guyaux et Sophie Marchal (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, février 2003).

composition (and part of the title) of Lemonnier's painting exhibited in 1814. Like Lemonnier's portrayal, her representation of a *salon* room was formal and grand, set up with early eighteenth-century furniture styles. Lemonnier's magnificent and elegant *salon* composition had inspired these new creations; Ancelot had brought the *salon* story, even a version of Lemonnier's visualisation, into practice.<sup>279</sup>

Had *salons* remained the domain of nineteenth-century aristocrats and *ancien régime* supporters, the *salon* story might have remained a marginal tale about eighteenth-century France. However, it also attracted the attention of nineteenth-

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<sup>279</sup> For discussion of other emulators, see Sylvie Aprile, 'La République au Salon: Vie et Mort d'une Forme de Sociabilité Politique (1865-1885),' *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 38 (1991): 473-487; Adeline Daumard, *La Bourgeoisie Parisienne de 1815 à 1848* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1963); Félix-Sébastien Feuillet de Conches, *Les salons de conversations* (Paris, 1882); Etienne Françoise, editor, 'La Vie de salon en France dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle,' in *Sociabilité de société bourgeoise en France, en Allemagne et en Suisse, 1750-1850* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilizations, 1986): 81-93; Benôit Lecoq, 'Les Cercles Parisiens au Début de la Troisième République: De l'Apogée au Déclin,' *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 32 (1985): 591-616. Farther afield, Harriet W. Preston noted that some of 'our American society – which is too generally either frigid or extremely frivolous – could use a little of the spiritual grace of the French *salon*'. For later interest in purchasing eighteenth-century *salon* objects to recreate scenes, see *Catalogue des tableaux anciens ... Provenant du salon de madame Geoffrin ... objets d'art et d'ameublement du XVIIIe siècle et autres ...* (Paris and Mannheim: F. Max-Kann, 1933); René Claude Catroux, *Vente du comte de la Bédoyère (objets provenant du salon de madame Geoffrin)* (Paris, 1921).



century republicans who accepted its existence, challenging only its purpose and effects. In their view, elite gatherings in *salons* were representative of *ancien régime* society: wasteful, decadent, and despotic. In place of the admiring perspective, they presented the *salon* as a corrupt and tradition-obsessed *ancien régime* institution that functioned as a prop to the existing order. Even in their critiques, though, they did not question the existence of the *salon* institution itself. With their voices added to the story, the discussion then revolved around whether the eighteenth-century *salon* was constructive or destructive for the French nation.

The republican Théophile Gautier gave Laure Junot the nickname of 'duchesse d'Abracadabrantes' and dismissed her characterisation of the *salon* as a form of aristocratic rehabilitation. An acquaintance of Junot, Napoleonic soldier Huvelins wrote that 'her narrative ... was built on lies from the bottom to the top.' Jules-François Lecomte was dismissive of Junot's attempts to recreate the eighteenth-century institution, writing that 'Madame d'Abrantes has a *salon*, but I do not know if there are many people who go there. I have been told that she received the most people on the day that the creditors came.'<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Théophile Gautier, *Correspondance générale, 1818-1843*, edited by Claudine Lacoste-Veysseyresous (Geneva and Paris: Droz, 1985): 134; Huvelins, *Souvenirs intimes et anecdotes d'un garde-du-corps des rois Louis XVIII et Charles X, publiés par Xavier de Montéjuin*, 10 volumes (Paris: A. Cadot, 1857-1858): II:27; *Lettres sur les écrivains français* (Brussels, 1838): 90; Jules-François Lecomte, *La Chronique Parisienne* (Paris, 1858): 42-43. For other critical accounts, see Marie de

The social critic Joel Cherbuliez found Junot's attachment to the *salon* 'ridiculous' and found her claims to have 'no value', a weakness he would not have found so troubling had it not carried with it the potential of dangerous political complications. He questioned her myopic disregard of those aspects of the past that had been less pleasant and about which she had remained silent. Critiquing her emphasis on past *salons*, he charged that she had missed their political meanings and focused on them only as sites of exquisite grace and good manners. Regarding her motivations with suspicion, he asked why she would write such a story. Why did she hope to resuscitate the grand spaces of the past?<sup>281</sup>

Cherbuliez challenged Junot's view as *bavardage*, stating that no such high-minded *salon* gathering had ever existed in the eighteenth century. Despite her claims to the contrary, he described her retrospective construction as fantasy, calling it dangerous nonsense. So much blood has been spilled to get rid of

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Chambrun, *Cinq dames de coeur et une jolie laide* (Paris: Flammarion, 1945); C. Lecigne, *Femmes de France*, 10 volumes (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1910-1930); Napoleon mentioned her briefly in his memoirs, questioning the illustrious lineage she had claimed in her writings; see Hubert Richardson, *A Dictionary of Napoleon and His Times* (Ann Arbor: Gryphon Books, 1971): 239-243; Auguste de Roosmalen, *Derniers momens de la duchesse d'Abrantès* (Paris, 1838); Tolstoi, *Rectification de quelques légères erreurs de madame la duchesse d'Abrantès par un Russe* (Paris, 1834).

<sup>281</sup> Joël Cherbuliez, 'Salons de Paris, de madame d'Abrantès,' *Revue critique des livres nouveaux* (1837): 297-309.

these excesses, he wrote, and now Junot was trying to bring back the aristocrats (and descendents) that were responsible for this: 'What! All the harsh lessons of the past are already forgotten! The terrible Revolutionary voice has been muffled by the cackling of the *grand monde*, and all the conquests of good sense so expensively bought are again sacrificed to childish rattles, to old rags of etiquette and of the noble mortuary. Deplorable servility, ridiculous blindness, threatens to plunge society back into troubles and convulsions without end'. Cherbuliez worried that readers of such books might have enough pretension to recreate this aristocratic *salon* spirit. Indeed he found her efforts intolerable: how could France claim to have progressed if the places of the *grand seigneur* returned?<sup>282</sup>

In this view, the *salon* was hardly an example of burgeoning revolutionary fervour, but rather exemplified the hierarchical order long established by the French monarchy and aristocracy. While he conceded that outsiders were occasionally admitted to the *salon*, they were hardly members. Instead, he argued that the non-aristocrats were simply presented as a form of entertainment to bemuse the old guard. The Revolution, he wrote,

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<sup>282</sup> Joel Cherbuliez, 'Salons de Paris,' *Revue critiques des livres nouveaux* (1837). In the same journal, Cherbuliez also critiqued her book, *Une Soirée chez madame Geoffrin*: 107-108. For further comments, see Joel Cherbuliez, *Revue de Paris* (1837): 9: 197-209 and *Revue de Paris* (1837): 45: 194-202.



happily swept away this corrupt and stagnant society and paved the way for egalitarian systems.

In the estimation of Cherbuliez, Gautier, and others, Junot and her friends were re-imagining the *salon* as a constructive force, rather than recognising it as central to *ancien régime* corruption. These republicans could not accept this rehabilitated *salon*, something considerably divergent from the perceived eighteenth-century realities. Junot, along with other supporters of the *salon*, certainly had many critics. These negative writings, though, only reinforced the construction of an eighteenth-century *salon* institution. While they did not grant the *salon* its dizzying power or its ideal characterisations, the criticism stirred further interest in these so-called *salons*.

While the *salon* ideal had its detractors, some high-ranking members of society mounted an active defense of the story. They accepted and circulated the extended story of the *salon*, thus giving greater substance to the legend. The writer Sainte-Beuve developed a passion for the stories of Revolutionary survivors. 'Happy time! When life as a whole was turned to sociability; when everything was arranged for the sweetest commerce of the mind and the best conversation'. Sainte-Beuve developed elaborate accounts of pre-Revolutionary high society in contemporary newspapers such as the *Revue de Paris*, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, *Le Globe*, *Le Moniteur*, and *Le Temps*. In these descriptions, he presented *ancien régime* figures as 'real people,'

devoting attention to the details of their everyday lives and personalities, including lengthy descriptions of how they spoke and dressed.<sup>283</sup>

Sainte-Beuve wrote about the *salons* in his *Portraits des femmes* and his *Causeries du lundi*. His prolific output did much to popularise and develop the story, and he offered a far more detailed definition of these *salons* than previously provided by Revolutionary survivors such as Lemonnier, Morellet, and Delille. In the words of Sainte-Beuve, the *salon* was an 'institution ... that was established, organised, practiced, and governed ... it was an art that supported a peaceful, regular society and required diplomacy and subtle and gently skill'.<sup>284</sup>

Sainte-Beuve prepared a literary portrait of Vichy du Deffand as a towering figure of eighteenth-century Parisian *salons*, 'a woman to be universally admired', who held the *salon* that stood at the centre of Parisian society, stressing the morality and sense of duty that prevailed in her home.<sup>285</sup> His work also

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<sup>283</sup> See Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi*, 16 volumes (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1851-1862): especially II: 120-125; 'Portraits de femmes,' in *Oeuvres*, edited by Maxime Le Roy, 2 volumes (Paris, 1960): I: 126-134.

<sup>284</sup> See Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi*, 16 volumes (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1851-1862): I: 412-431, XIV: 218-237 for Vichy du Deffand; II: 309-329 for Geoffrin; and II:121-142 for Lespinasse.

<sup>285</sup> Later biographies of Vichy du Deffand developed these narrative links, including Benedetta Craveri, *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, translated by Teresa Waugh (Boston: D.R. Godine, 1994); Lionel Duisit, *Madame du Deffand, epistolière* (Geneva: Droz, 1963); Claude Ferval,

enlarged the number of individuals associated with the *salon* story. In addition to Vichy du Deffand, Lespinasse, and Geoffrin, Sainte-Beuve credited several new characters with governing the institution, including Emilie du Châtelet, Louise Epinay, Françoise de Graffigny, and Suzanne Necker. He also held up Anne-Thérèse Lambert as an eighteenth-century model of virtue, describing how she opened a 'place of refuge for conversation ... and serious discussions, offering the greatest degree of decency and regularity ... (away from) the debauchery' of that era. Sainte-Beuve extended the chronology of the institution, claiming that the French *salon* had started 150 years earlier than previously described. In his view, Catherine de Rambouillet founded the

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*Madame du Deffand. L'Esprit et l'amour au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1932); André Maurois, *Quatre études anglaises: madame du Deffand et Horace Walpole, Lord Byron et le démon de la tendresse, de Ruskin à Wilde, la jeune littérature anglaise* (Paris: L'Artisan du Livre, 1927); Gaston Rageot, *Madame du Deffand* (Fontenay-aux-Roses: Bellenand et Fils and Paris: Albin Michel, 1937). Both Sainte-Beuve and Ségur emphasised a connection to the hostess, Sévigné, noting that Vichy was born just one year after her death, thus continuing the *salon* line. See *Madame de Sévigné, her Letters and her World*, edited by Arthur Stanley (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1946). Similar links were made with Louise Tardieu d'Esclavelles, marquise d'Epinay; see the introduction of Louise Tardieu d'Esclavelles, marquise d'Epinay, *Correspondance, Ferdinando Galiani, Louise d'Epinay*, edited by Georges Dulac and Daniel Magetti (Paris: Desjonquères, 1992-1997).



*salon* institution in the 1620s and eighteenth-century figures were emulating the practice that she created.<sup>286</sup>

Directing his readers to learn more, Sainte-Beuve gave a highly favourable recommendation of the publications of the Goncourts brothers, describing them as 'producing a mine of information'. Like Sainte-Beuve, these two men played up the refined qualities of the *ancien régime salon*, also claiming that the institution provided a model of civilised behaviour, contrasting such sensibilities with the vulgar republican and Napoleonic years. The Goncourts further developed these sites of memory, freezing particular moments and embroidering bits and pieces with a mixture of forgetfulness as well as remembrance. With their emphasis on civilised living, moral influences, and literary inspiration, they credited the *salon* with promoting virtues of custom and conduct by preserving a sense of principled living and exquisite taste. Following in the path of Sainte-Beuve, they also provided an extended chronology and cast of characters for the institution.

The Goncourts went on to describe how 'Paris before the Revolution was regarded as the *salon* of Europe ... (it was in) the *salon* that the height of France's grace and elegance were achieved ... (this was) a social order destined to dominate Europe, dictator of taste, school of manners of all its nations, the

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<sup>286</sup> See Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi*, 16 volumes (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1851-1862); *Nouveaux lundis*, 13 volumes (Paris, 1864-1870): II: 402-414.

model as it were of human society ... formed to distinguish itself from bad company, from vulgar to provincial society, by perfection of its charm and conviviality, urbanity of its usages, by art of tact, indulgence and worldly wisdom, by, in a word, all the refinements and discoveries of that social spirit ... with the spirit of charity'.<sup>287</sup>

They sought to immortalise the individuals responsible for the cultivation of these sets, noting that to know society in the eighteenth century, 'one must look at the *salons*'. In their view, Parisian society took place in the *salons*, directed and governed by women. In these settings, canonical figures such as Vichy du Deffand, Lespinasse, and Geoffrin promised audiences, favour, and success. Their *salons* were held up as examples of feminine perfection. The Goncourts wrote that these women established *bureaux d'esprit* that occupied the attention of the elite who sought the honour of admittance; by their reception, these women bestowed purpose upon their guests' lives.<sup>288</sup>

In *La Femme au XVIIIe siècle*, the Goncourts detailed how this civility derived from the dominance and beauty of French women who exerted their power over dogmatic and combative men. They placed refined sociability in the grand houses of Paris, associated all of them with women, and then described the *salons* as representing the personalities of the ladies

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<sup>287</sup> Edmond de Goncourt et Jules de Goncourt, *Portrait intime du XVIIIème siècle* (Paris: Dentu, 1857): 44.

<sup>288</sup> Goncourts (1857): 44-45.

of the houses. Each woman established her own circle of genius, imagination, and talent, where she brought together good company and upheld the standards as derived from taste. Collectively, they mentored civilised living and exercised a moral influence by promoting virtues of custom and conduct, by entertaining a spirit of self-respect, and by preserving their sense of honour.

According to the Goncourts, eighteenth-century *salon* life was a 'purely French phenomenon that represented typical elements of the national character. It was a cult of honour, the last and most selfless institution of the aristocracy'.<sup>289</sup>

Historian and literary critic Hippolyte Taine was also drawn to the story of the *salon*.<sup>290</sup> Following the upheavals of the Franco-Prussian War, Taine was convinced that the instability of late nineteenth-century France could be traced to the 1789 Revolution. From his Academy position, and in conversation with the Goncourt brothers, he set out to produce a six-volume history of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French history to explain these processes. In *Les Origines de la France*

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<sup>289</sup> Edmond de Goncourt et Jules de Goncourt, *La femme au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: Firmin-Didot Frères, 1862; Charpentier, 1882; Flammarion, 1935): 75-114, especially 77-78. See also *Correspondance général (1843-1862)*, presented and annotated by Pierre-Jean Dufief (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2004). For further analysis on the subject of the Goncourts' fascination with *ancien régime* society, see Deborah Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>290</sup> Hippolyte Taine, *The Ancien Régime*, translated by John Durand (New York: Peter Smith, 1931): 123-169, especially 138, 157.



*Contemporaine*, he set forth his conclusion that the Revolution had been incorrectly attributed with creating liberty when it had, he believed, destroyed this principle. He challenged the ideological abstractions of the Revolutionaries, which he believed had given them a false sense of superiority and absolute righteousness. In his first volume, *L'ancien régime*, he devoted a fifth of his sweeping idealisation of this era to the individuals, mores, and habits of the *salon*. It was this institution, yet again, that was reified as a site of ideal sociability, one that Taine and others had hoped that France might return.<sup>291</sup>

By the turn of the twentieth century, the eighteenth-century *salon* institution came to be a recognised phenomenon and

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<sup>291</sup> For others' acceptance of this *salon* story in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Paul Deschanel, *Figures des femmes* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1900); Marie Antionette Virginie de Lafayette, marquise de Lasteryrie du Saillant, *Life of Madame de Lafayette* (Paris: L. Techener, 1872); *Madame du Deffand et sa famille: gens d'autrefois* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1903); *Julie de Lespinasse* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1905); *Royaume de la rue Saint-Honoré: madame Geoffrin et sa fille* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1898); *Silhouettes historiques* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1911); *Vieux dossiers; petits papiers* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1913); Alexandre Dumas, *Les Confessions de la marquise: suite et fin des mémoires d'une aveugle* (Paris: M. Lévy Frères, 1875); *La Marquise de Boufflers et son fils le chevalier de Bouffler* (Paris: 1907); Lucien Perey, *Une Femme du monde au XVIIIe siècle. La Jeunesse de madame d'Epinay, d'après des lettres et des documents inédits* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1898); *Histoire d'une grande dame au XVIIIe siècle, la princesse Hélène de Ligne* (Paris: C.Lévy, 1887); Gaston Rageot, *Madame du Deffand* (Paris: A. Michel, 1937); Paul Barron Watson, *Some Women of France* (New York: Coward-Mann, 1936).

the focus of several popular histories. In *The Women of the French Salons*, Amelia Gare Mason provided short biographies of the *salon* women including Vichy du Deffand, Lespinasse, and Geoffrin, noting that while these individuals operated outside the official corridors of power, they nevertheless demonstrated considerable leadership and thus should be recognised for their governance in French society. This was one example in an outpouring of *salon* literature, including Théodore Aynard, *Les Salons d'autrefois*; M. Hippeau, *Les Salons de Paris au XVIIIe siècle*; Louis Nicolardot, *Les Cours et les salons au XVIIIe siècle*; Florence Ravenel, *Women and the French Tradition*; and S.G. Tallentyre, *The Women of the Salons, and Other French Portraits*.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> See Amelia Gere-Mason, *The Women of French Salons* (New York: The Century Company, 1891 and London: T.F. Unwin, 1891). Others who fondly recorded *salon* society included Théodore Aynard, *Les Salons d'autrefois, souvenirs de 1828 à 1848* (Lyon: Mougin-Rusand, 1887); Gerard Baal, 'Un Salon Dreyfusard, des Lendemain de L'Affaire à la Grand Guerre: La Marquise Arconati-Visconti et ses Amis,' *Revue Moderne et Contemporaine* (Juillet - Septembre 1981): 433-463; M. Montigny, *Grands salons littéraires (XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles) conférences du Musée Carnavalet (1927), avec 16 illustrations hors texte* (Paris: Payot, 1928); Sophie Gay, *Salon célèbres* (Paris: Michel Lévy Frères, 1864); Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm, *Les Salons de Paris* (Paris: 1877); Le comte Gabriel Haussonville, *Le Salon de madame Necker: d'après des documents tirés des archives de Coppet* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1882); M. Hippeau, *Les Salons de Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Caen: L'Académie de Caen, 1876); Anaïs Lebrun, comtesse de Bassanville, *Les Salons d'autrefois. Souvenirs intimes par madame la comtesse de*

Marcel Proust, in his writings about aristocratic life in early twentieth-century Paris, set out descriptions of past and present *salon* culture. A series of articles for *Le Figaro* described 'La Vie de Paris: La Comtesse de Guerne', as emulating the charm and prestige of the *ancien régime* institution. He described this hostess as beautiful, witty, and kind, praising the *comtesse* for her rarefied knowledge of French literature, art, and music. In 'Le Cour et Les Roses: Le Salon de Madame Madeleine Lemaire', Proust praised Lemaire for the exclusivity of her *salon*, which assured that only people of the greatest wit and amiability were brought together. In 'Le Salon de Comtesse Potocka', Proust detailed all of the faithful in the 'little flock' followed her.<sup>293</sup>

## Conclusion

The numerous writings on the subject established considerable currency for this historical object, and its proliferation appeared to place it beyond doubt. Given the long journey from *salon* rooms to the *salon* institution, it will be useful to conclude by retracing our steps, and thus reviewing the primary points of

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*Bassanville* (Paris: P. Brunet, 1862); Louis Nicolardot, *Les Cours et les salons au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1879).

<sup>293</sup> Marcel Proust, 'Le Cour et Les Roses: Le Salon de Madame Madeleine Lemaire,' *Le Figaro* (May 11, 1903); 'La Vie de Paris: La Comtesse de Guerne,' *Le Figaro* (May 7, 1905); 'Le Salon de Comtesse Potocka,' *Le Figaro* (May 13, 1904); 'Salons,' *Le Figaro* (March 7, 1905).



this thesis. In the first section, we began with the dominant claims about the Enlightenment *salon* with which we are all familiar. This included the common definition of the *salon* as regular gatherings of individuals for the purpose of engaging in free thinking, proto-political debates, and constructive criticism. More specifically, many prominent historians characterise the *salon* as the ideal place for intellectual production, embodying a form of sociability that emerged in the decades immediately preceding the French Revolution and which contributed to the significant upheavals of this time. Most notably, Habermas has trumpeted the merits of the *salon* in the histories of France and Europe, as part of his now well-known theory of the emerging public sphere in eighteenth-century Europe. In this work, he described the formation of this polite and informed public and how this group overcame economic and social differences to unite in common principles, thus creating a new order of reciprocal and equal exchange. Habermas' theory was a considerable revision, and has become a touchstone for scholars working in many areas, including historians of France who accept his idea of the *salon* as a proto-democratic society.

A few key scholars have focused on the construction of *salon* women in this emerging public sphere. They argue that *salonnières*, the women historically singled out as *salon* organisers, transformed the *salon* institution from a noble, leisure form into a serious, working space. They present these *salonnières*

as the governors of the reciprocal exchange that Habermas has described, and they place this female-governed *salon* at the centre of the Enlightenment project. It is a view of *salon* leadership that several scholars of seventeenth- and nineteenth-century France are following with interest; these scholars readily accept this view of the *salon* and have expanded the chronology of the *salon* institution to include the eras which they study. It is this expanded *salon* definition that is now widely accepted by many contemporary scholars of France, adopted and disseminated well beyond the domain of the scholarly monograph. A combination of scholarly production and mass-market interest firmly establish the idea of the *salon* in European history.

However, as presented in the second section, there is a problem with this shared faith in the existence of the Enlightenment *salon*, one that stems from methodology. The historians who make such significant claims have, by and large, relied on Habermas' twentieth-century claims, nineteenth-century narratives, and occasionally eighteenth-century letters altered by nineteenth-century editors. Few return to the extant materials of the eighteenth century to substantiate their argument. The majority of scholars, who cite nineteenth-century sources (and sometimes even twentieth-century books) for their eighteenth-century *salon* descriptions, overlook the process by which some pre-Revolutionary practices were re-imagined, reconfigured, and ultimately reified as the *salon* institution.

The consistency of the historical descriptions – phrases such as 'to hold a *salon*' and 'to attend a *salon*' – give the mistaken appearance that there was a unified vocabulary of these *salons* in the eighteenth century. To the contrary, as much as recent language about the *salon* has been fixed, the contemporary descriptions of Parisian gatherings are variable. Eighteenth-century writers did not describe the major tenets of the institution – neither the democratic and egalitarian practices praised by twentieth-century scholars, nor the harmony and unity described by nineteenth-century writers. Instead, the varied descriptions of eighteenth-century gatherings present colourful personalities, an abundance of food and drink, pleasure seeking, and an intense acknowledgement of status. The available historical records describe *soupers*, *dîners*, *maisons ouvertes*, *pots royaux*, garden *fêtes*, card games, and amateur theatricals.

In the third section, we studied how certain women – most notably Marie Vichy du Deffand and Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin – were only later named as the leaders of this *ancien régime* entity, central to that emerging mythology. We analysed their eighteenth-century lives, from their personal documents (as well as the writings of their friends and acquaintances), some of which have recently become available, and others which have been overlooked or unexamined by scholars of the *salon*. Those sources present an opportunity to evaluate the dissonance between twentieth-century historiography and the actual lives of these two



eighteenth-century women. They provide the basis for a more accurate picture of these two women to replace the distorted portrayals of other eras. In addition, they provide the materials to understand the altogether different *salons* that were familiar to Vichy du Deffand and Geoffrin: *salon* rooms designated for specific activities by expert architects.

Vichy du Deffand admired the luxurious *salon* environment of her era, especially her cousin's country property, Château Chanteloup, designed by Nicolas Le Camus de Mézières. Hired to completely renovate Chanteloup in the 1760s, this architect was tasked with creating innovative and elaborate spaces for the Choiseuls. No detail was spared, with different *salons* made to match every conceivable need of the family – unique and fixed spaces were created for lounging, gaming, eating, and bathing. Camus brought to Chanteloup the novelties that he and other French architects had been imagining and creating. It was a project that considerably raised his visibility, and with its completion, Camus achieved a success that catapulted him into prominence in Parisian design circles. More high-profile commissions followed, and he rose to the top ranks of the architects' profession to become one of the leaders of the eighteenth-century *salon* movement.

In the fourth section, we analysed how these *salon* innovations were a key tool in the development of the industry of Parisian architects. Providing designer spaces was the crucial

service that this emerging class of architects offered to develop their profession, and at the centre of their business were the fashionable and novel *salon* rooms created for their demanding elite clients. They sold their planning, polish, and creativity to set themselves apart from the masons and builders that had traditionally been responsible for residential projects in France. Offering more than standard construction skills, these men claimed unique expertise and knowledge and established independent businesses outside the confines of guild organisations. Specifically, these architects promoted a wide range of *salons*, *salles*, and *sallettes*, designed to meet the various functions and activities of their modern-thinking clients. Among the rooms created were *salons de jeux* (game rooms), *salons du billard* (billiard rooms), *salons* and *sallettes des musiques* (music rooms), *salons* and *salles des bains* (bathing rooms), *salons de compagnie* (company rooms), *salles* and *sallettes à manger* (dining rooms), *boudoirs* (similar to dressing rooms), and *cabinets* (offices). These architects created the physical settings from which the *salon* institution later emerged in the nineteenth century.

However, it was in the 1790s that the industry was disrupted by severe political upheavals taking place in Paris and throughout much of France. As a result of the Revolution, the novel architectural forms of pre-1789 Paris underwent significant transformations. The *salons* were no longer distinct for their innovation and creativity; instead these rooms became the *biens*

*nationaux*. The new government of France directed a group of architects to review thousands of Parisian properties and identify sites for confiscation. More than two hundred meetings later, four thousand properties had been nationalised and sold in the city of Paris. Auction proceeds were then used to prop up the precarious and rapidly changing political leadership; dozens of structures also became government buildings to house newly created ministries. In the case of Vichy du Deffand, her apartment building became a factory for the production and storage of arms. Her cousins' *château*, Chanteloup, was looted and partially burned, with only the *chinoise*-style pagoda untouched. The house of Geoffrin, which had been inherited by her cousins, was sold for national proceeds. Through this process of nationalisation and sales, these rooms became deeply politicised, symbols of the events of the 1790s; as such they became the vigorously contested properties of the *ancien régime*.

In the fifth section, we examined the consequences of these losses, particularly as they were described in the late years of the Napoleonic era and the early Restoration period when some individuals expressed their opinions on these earlier events. At that time, many Revolutionary survivors also began to promote their rosy views of pre-Revolutionary life, advocating a return to *ancien régime* systems and values. As part of this process, the *salons* were redefined. In the early nineteenth century, they were transformed from architectural novelties into a particular type of



social gathering, one that was characterised by high-minded and elegant exchanges. These descriptions emerged in their romanitised descriptions of a 'lost world' and its genesis came from a combination of careful selection, ideal reconstruction, and blurred nostalgia. They also converged around a particular painting by a Revolutionary survivor, one that depicted an eighteenth-century *salon* room. This piece of art served as an important bridge between the architectural novelty known to the previous era and the emergence of a cultural story about the *salon* institution as an ideal type of intellectual gathering of the *ancien régime*. It was an image subsequently republished by others who wrote histories of the *salon* institution and who called on their readers to emulate this imagined tradition. Subsequent writers played up the refined qualities of these eighteenth-century *salon* gatherings, claiming that the institution provided a model of civilised behaviour. With each retelling, the early nineteenth-century creation of the *salon* institution became more obscured and multiplying narratives shrouded the eighteenth-century practices. Nostalgia, legacy, and contemporary political partisanship created considerable distance from eighteenth-century individuals, places, and practices. This has been the disconnect between the extant documentation and the popular retelling of the Enlightenment *salon* story.

## ARCHIVAL SOURCES

### Archives Nationales

#### *Série E*

E/3629

#### Conseil du Roi

Lois relatives à la vente des  
domaines nationaux, 1791-1793

#### *Série F*

F/7

Police générale: Emigrés

F/12/1486-1490

La Compagnie de Saint-Gobain

F/13

Bâtiments civils: Edifices pris  
comme bâtiments publics et  
sièges de services administratifs

F/13/207/28

Etat des Maisons et Bâtiments  
nationaux occupés par les Corps  
Administratifs, la Municipalité,  
les Tribunaux et les Cazernes

F/13/218A

Bâtiments civils et biens  
nationaux

F/13/324

Bâtiments civils: Plans de  
bâtiments situés aux environs des  
Tuileries

F/14

La Collection de cartes illustrées  
de l'Atlas de Trudaine

F/17/1034

Instruction publique: Commission  
Temporaire des arts

F/17/1037

Instruction publique: Objets des  
arts

F/17/1039B

Instruction publique: Commission  
Temporaire des arts

F/17/1074/dossier 6

Laborde: procès-verbeaux de la  
Commission des Monuments et

	des tableaux et objets d'art saisis chez les Emigrés et Condamnés et envoyés au Museum Central
F/21/1875	Plans des édifices: l'examen du Conseil des bâtiments civils, An IV
F/21/1991	Bâtiments, An XIX
F/21/*2470	Conseils des Bâtiments Civils, procès-verbaux
F/21/2907	Bâtiments Civils and Palais Nationaux
F/21/7669	Monuments historiques
F/31/73	Plans de Vasserot par îlots levés en 1810-1836 et plans par immeubles avec la liste des propriétaires
<b><i>Série H</i></b>	<b><i>Administrations Locales et Comptabilités Diverses</i></b>
H/2	Bureau de la Ville de Paris: Intendance et Généralité de Paris
H/2/1880	Registres des délibérations du Bureau de la Ville de Paris
H/2/1965	Hôtel de Conti
H/2/2081	Délibérations, affaires particulières, devis et baux
H/2/2121 and 2122	Permissions de bâtir, travaux, comptabilités de la ville de Paris
H/2/2176	Documents sur les patentes, les biens nationaux et le mobilier des bureaux de la commune de Paris, 1791-1796
H/2/2178	Comptabilité de la commission des biens nationaux
H/2/2179	Extraits des délibérations prises par le comité d'administration des



	domaines nationaux du 6 août 1790 au 1er octobre 1791
H/2/2387	Permissions de bâtir, travaux, comptabilité de la ville
H/5/4121*	Filles de Saint-Joseph, dites de la Providence, rue Saint-Dominique Recettes, 1719-1792
H/5/4122*	Recettes des loyers, Filles de Saint-Joseph, 1776-1792
H/5/4213	Rentes, quittances d'ouvriers et de fournisseurs Filles de Saint-Joseph, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles
<b><i>Série K</i></b>	<b><i>Monuments Historiques</i></b>
K/1025	Embellissements de Paris
K/1050 and 1051	Archives du Bureau de la Ville
<b><i>Série M</i></b>	<b>Ordres Militaires et Hospitaliers, Universités et Collèges, Titres Nobiliaires, et Mélanges</b>
M/666	Arrêtés, rapports, correspondance sur la suppression des armoiries et emblèmes monarchiques, féodaux et religieux figurant sur les édifices publics et privés de Paris, 1790-1795
M/711, 712, 718	Archives des établissements parisiens supprimés à la Révolution: états de dépôts existant à la fin de l'ancien régime, procès-verbaux d'enlèvement d'archives, inventaires, correspondance; Congrégations féminines (711 et 712); Familles et associations (718)

***Série N***

N/I Seine/52

N/I Seine/56

N/II Seine/251

N/III Seine/1044

***Cartes et plans (ancien régime)***

N/IV Seine/60

N/IV Seine/64

N/IV Seine/71

N/V Seine/86

***Série O***

O/I/666

Pensions de la Maison du roi: correspondance, brevets, états de pension sur la cassette du roi et sur les Bâtiments. Dossiers alphabétiques de pensions sur le Trésor royal, Fin XVIIIe siècle

O/I/1081

Concernant les affaires générales sur les divers départements des Bâtiments

O/I/1244 and 1245

Règlements et mémoires sur l'administration des bâtiments

O/I/1291

Inventaires anciens de papiers, cartes et plans; répertoires de registres de renvois, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles

O/I/1343 and 1382

Choisy (château et jardins)

O/I/1929

Académie d'architecture: procès-verbaux des séances, 1671-1793

O/I/1990 to 1992A

Glaces: correspondance, mémoires, états de livraisons, comptes, relevés, inventaires des manufactures des glaces

O/III

Direction générale des bâtiments, jardins, arts, académies et manufactures royales

***Série Q*****Biens nationaux et affaires domaniales**

Q/1\*/1099/1

Registres du Roi, 1703-1720

Q/1\*/1099/159

Travail des limites de la ville et des faubourgs

Q/1/1133/1A

Soumissions pour acquisition de biens nationaux, 1790-1795

Q/1/1138 and 1139

Hôtel Grimod de la Reynière, 3 octobre, 1784

Q/1/1152, 1153, 1154, 1162

Deuxième mairie: quartiers de la Chaussée-d'Antin (1152 and 1153), du Palais-Royal (1154) et du Faubourg-Montmartre (1162)

Q/2/117-118

Biens nationaux et affaires domaniales: procès-verbaux d'estimation

***Série R******Papiers des Princes***

R/4

Apanage d'Orléans

R/5

Apanage de Provence

***Série S******Biens des Etablissements Religieux Supprimés***

S/V

Congrégations religieuses de femmes à Paris

S/4734 to 4737

Filles de Saint-Joseph, rue Saint Dominique



***Série T***

**Papiers séquestrés pendant la  
Révolution**

Blau (25)

Coigny (201)

Fitz-James (186)

Fleury (166)

Gouffier (153-157)

Grimod de la Reynière (743, 1632)

Javon (60)

Kinsky (220)

Joly de Fleury (342)

Laborde (1097)

Montholon (115)

Montmorency (133)

Montesquieu (349)

Nicolay (3)

Noailles (111)

Pointard (26)

Roederer (29)

Schomberg (8)

Trémouille (1051)

Uzès (265)

***Série U***

***Extraits et Procédures  
Judiciaires***

U/1383\*

Livre-journal de Louis-  
François Bertheau-Duverger,  
négociant à Paris, 1771-1772

U/1384	Etat sommaire des bilans déposés au greffe du Châtelet de Paris, 1757-1791
<b><i>Série Y</i></b>	<b><i>Châtelet et Prévôté d’Ile-de- France</i></b>
Z/1	Juridictions spéciales
Y/9505/A to 9507/B	Scellés après décès et les rapports d’experts pour les oeuvres d’art plus d'un millier de dossiers relatifs à la construction ou reconstruction de maisons
<b><i>Série Z</i></b>	<b>Chambre des Bâtiments: Procès-verbaux de visites de bâtiments avec des plans</b>
Z/1	Juridictions spéciales
Z/1/A	Cour des Aides
Z/1/F	Chambre du trésor, bureau des finances et chambre du domaine de la généralité de Paris
Z/1/F/II	Registres et minutes concernant généralement la voirie et les ponts et chaussées
Z/1/F/955-957	Répertoire des plans du quartier Planchette, Poissonniere, et Saint-Honoré déposés au Bureau des Finances, 1770
Z/1/J	Greffiers des Bâtiments
Z/1/J/992	Bélangier à Laurent Grimod de la Reynière, 9 juillet, 1760
Z/1/J/1015	Visite et Estimation d’ouvrages pour la

	construction d'un hôtel à la Chaussée d'Antin appartenant à Monsieur de Necker
Z/1/J/1045	Visite à Hôtel de Noailles, Jacques Thomas Miller, février 1779
Z/1/J/1052	Visite à Hôtel de Noailles, Jacques Thomas Miller, septembre 1779
Z/1/J/1091	Etat des Travaux, Sieur Rouille
Z/1/J/1112	Jean Fessard Maçon
Z/1/J/1171, 1782	Baudard de Saint-James
Z/1/J/II/1276, 1277	Hôtel de Salm, 1780-1794
<i>Série AP</i>	<i>Les fonds des grandes familles</i>
AP/508	Famille Geoffrin
AP/508/34-36	Marie-Thérèse Rodet, femme de François Geoffrin  Manufacture des glaces. Titres de propriété.
AP/508/37-38	Lettres de Madame Geoffrin à  Stanislas Poniatowski, roi de  Pologne, 1764-1777  Lettres de M. de la Genetière Lettres de Stanislas Poniatowski, roi de Pologne, 1764-1777
Private Collection	Carnet des adresses (held in the private collection of the comte de Bruce, photocopy courtesy of Dena Goodman)



***Série CP***

CP/N/111

Seine 1044, rue de la Chaussée  
d'Antin, Terrains et Maisons

CP/17/(A)

Catalogue Général des Cartes,  
Plans, et Dessins d'Architecture

***Minutier Central de Notaires de Paris***

***Number***

***Sections***

VII

439 Testament de Marie Vichy du  
Deffand, 1779

VII

445 Testament de Marie Vichy du  
Deffand (addendum), 1779

VII

Rés 448 Inventaire après décès,  
Marie Vichy du Deffand, 16  
octobre, 1780 and 30 novembre,  
1780

XXI

630 Inventaire après décès,  
Laurent Grimod de la Reynière,  
12 novembre, 1796, notaires  
Raffeneau de Lile et Pierre Victor

XXV

993 Vente de meubles,  
Alexandre-Balthazar Grimod de la  
Reynière à Jean Toussaint  
Château, Marchand de Meuble, 9  
Messidor, An VIII

XXV

1053 Succession de Suzanne-  
Françoise de Jarente, 1815

XXXV

1046 Inventaire après décès,  
Suzanne-Françoise de Jarente, 26  
mai, 1815

XXXV

1134 Inventaire après décès,  
Alexandre Balthazar Grimod de la  
Reynière, 14 avril, 1838

XXXV

1172 Inventaire après décès,  
Adelaide Thérèse Feuchère, 27  
juin, 1845

XCV	150 Contrat de Antoine Grimod de la Reynière, 18 octobre, 1739
LXI	594 Inventaire après décès, Louise-Florence Pétronville Tardie d'Esclavelle, Marquise D'Epinay, 12 mai, 1783
LXXXIII	Rés 542 Testament et Inventaire après décès, Julie-Eléonore de Lespinasse, 22 mai, 1776
LXXXIII	Rés 543 Succession de Julie-Eléonore Lespinasse, 31 mai, 1776
LXXXIV	Rés 615 Inventaire après décès, duc de Choiseul, 8 juin, 1785
LXXXVIII	497 Inventaire après décès, Antoine Gaspard Grimod de la Reynière, 17 novembre, 1726
CXVII	879 Testament de Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, 8 février, 1777 and 25 mai, 1777
CXVII	886 Inventaire après décès, Marie-Thérèse Rodet Geoffrin, octobre 1779

#### Archives de Paris

IV/2/1/DQ/10	<i>Biens nationaux, 1790-1820, Inventaire sommaire alphabétique</i>
IV/2/11/DQ/10/692	<i>Biens nationaux, assiette des contributions foncière et mobilière, An X-1814</i>
IV/2/12/DQ/10	<i>Biens nationaux et successions de déshérence; séquestres de condamnés</i>
IV/2/13/DQ/10/719	<i>Indemnité accordée aux émigrés, loi du 27 avril 1825</i>

## **Jurisdiction consulaire**

III/1/1/D/2/B/6	<i>Minutes des jugements et sentences, 1750</i>
III/1/2/D/4/B/6	<i>Bilans et dossiers de faillité, 1695-1791</i>
D210/719 to 723	<i>Dossiers d'indemnités accordées aux émigrés</i>
D1/Z	<i>Collection Lazare: dossiers par rues classés</i>
DQ/10	<i>Fonds des Domaines nationaux de Paris et du département, répertoire alphabétique de rues et de personnes</i>
DQ/10/1621,1622, and 1623	Grimod de la Reynière, 30 juin, 1779
DQ/13/283	Sommier foncier des biens nationaux de la Ville de Paris
V/N/4	<i>Anciens titres de propriété de Domaine de la ville, par rues classés</i>

## **Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris**

Maps	Delagrive, 1728 Turgot, 1734-39 Delagrive, 1744 Jaillot, 1775 <i>Verniquet, 1792</i>
Fichier Marcel Poète	<i>Bâtiments, par rues</i>

## **Bibliothèque Nationale Manuscripts**

NAF 21710	<i>Suard correspondence, 1745</i>
NAF 2994	<i>Le souper des dupes, 1771</i>



*Lequeu Collection, Cabinet des Estampes*

*Robert de Cotte Collection, Cabinet des Estampes*

*Chanteloup Collection, Cabinet des Estampes*

***Doucet Collection: Architecture, Vielle Réserve***

Fol 8:26      *Boucher fils, Six fontaines par Boucher fils, rue Saint Jacques aux 2 piliers d'or*

Fol 8:97      *Le Camu, Suite de poêles antiques, Paris*

Fol 92      *Bosse, Collections de dessins de dix-huit poêles de formes antiques et moderne de l'invention de la manufacture du sieur Olivier rue de la Roquette, s.l.n.d.*

Fol 95      *Hôtel Lauzun*

Fol VL13      *Le Camu, Poêles antiques*

*J. Camus, Elévations des Bâtiments, Décorations, Intérieurs, Fontaines*

*Cauvet, Recueil d'ornements à l'usage des jeunes artistes qui se destinent à la décoration des bâtiments, 1777*

Fol VN10      *Dessins de candelabres (30 dessins)*

*Modèles de candelabres (28 pièces)*

*J.B. Pierre, Fontaines*

*Recueil de Vases ou Fontaines*

**Ministère de la Culture**

Inventaire général de patrimoine

**Musée Carnavalet**

Manuscript and prints collections: Eighteenth-century topography

**Musée Nissim de Camondo**

Object collections

**Private Archives, Manuscripts, and Collections**

- Château Breteuil (Choiseul, France)
- Château de Jean-Baptiste Machaut d’Arnouville (Thoiry, France)
- Château du Marais (St. Cheron, France)
- Château Montgeoffroy (Maze, France)
- Château de Saint-Jean de Beauregard (Saint-Jean de Beauregard, France)

**Topographie Parisienne, Hôtel de Rôhan**

Manuscript and prints collections: Eighteenth-century topography

**Université de Paris IV, Centre de Roland Mousnier**

Notes and recordings from the Annik Pardailhé-Galabrun project, *La Naissance de l’intime: 3000 foyers Parisiens XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988.

**Extant Buildings**

Aumont	Clermont-Tonnerre	Montmorency
Bagatelle	Crozat	Moras
Baudard de Saint-James	Estrées	Nevers
Beauharnais	Evreux	Peyrenc de Moras
Beaujon	Fitz-James	Pugol
Belle-Isle	Gouffier de Thoix	Rôhan
Bérancourt	Gramont	Roquelaure
Bernard	Hallwyl	Saint-Florentin
Bérulle	Kinsky	Salé
Besenval	Lauzun	Salm
Biron	Le Pelletier de Saint-	Soissons

	Fargeau	
Botterel de Quintin	Matignon	Soubise
Châtelet	Mercy-Argenteau	Soyecourt
Chaulnes	Montholon	Uzès

**Images of Buildings**

Argenson	Desmarets	Noailles
Avaux	Evry	Orléans
Ballincourt	Ferrare	Pajou
Barry	Fontenay-Mareuil	Pompadour
Bauffremont	Gouthière	Randon de Pommery
Beauvais	Grimod de la Reynière	Revière
Benoist de Sainte-Paule	Guimard	Rolland
Bénouville	Hosten	Rouillé
Béthune	Jarnac	Saint-Aignan
Bourbon	Lambert	Sainte-Foix
Breteuil	Lebrun	Saint-Germain
Briseaux	Louveciennes	Sully
Brunoy	Louvois	Thélusson
Callet	Luxembourg	Thiers
Caron	Maine	Varanjeville
Castainer	Maisons	Vassale
Chenot	Marly	Vaupalière
Chevreuse	Masserano	Villemeneust



Choiseul	Monaco	Villeroy
Clermont	Montsauge	Villette
Conti	Monville	Vrillière
Courmont	Neubourg	Wurzburg
Dervieux		

**Images and Objects**

Anonymous, Designs for French stoves, Hôtel de Conti
Anonymous, <i>La Conversation</i> , published in Jacques Delille’s <i>La Conversation</i>
Anonymous, Marble and gilt fountain, <i>salle à manger</i> at Hôtel Châtelet
Anonymous, Panelling from the <i>salle à manger</i> of Hôtel de Pomponne
Anonymous, <i>Repas de nos philosophes</i>
Anonymous, <i>Vichy du Deffand</i>
Carmontelle, <i>Conversations des gens du monde</i>
John Carter, <i>Walpole Taking Snuff</i>
Cochin, <i>Chats de Geoffrin</i>
François Dequevauviller, <i>L'Assemblée au concert</i>
François Desportes, <i>L'Hallali du cerf</i>
Jean de La Fontaine, <i>Paté d'anguille</i>
Jean-François de Troy, <i>La Lecture de Molière</i>
Jean-François de Troy, <i>Le déjeuner d'huitres</i>
James Gillray, <i>Un Petit souper à la Parisienne</i>
Jana Christyana Kamsetzer, Floor plans of Hôtel de la Grimod de la Reynière
Antoine Kropper, Stove at the Château de Marais

Nicolas Lancret, <i>Déjeuner du jambon</i>
Moreau le Jeune, <i>Souper à Louveciennes, 2 septembre 1772</i>
Jacques Le Queu, Drawings of <i>salles à manager</i> and <i>salons chinois</i>
Jean-Michel Moreau, <i>Le coucher de la mariée</i>
Jean-Michel Moreau, <i>Le souper de Louis XV à Louveciennes</i>
Michel Barthélemy Ollivier, <i>Souper du Prince Louis-François de Conti</i>
Michel Barthélemy Ollivier, <i>Thé à l'anglaise au salon des Quatre-Glaces au Temple</i>
Hyacinthe Rigaud, <i>Portrait de Jules-Hardouin Mansart</i>
Hyacinthe Rigaud, <i>Portrait of Robert de Cotte</i>
Hubert Robert, <i>Madame Geoffrin dans son cabinet</i>
Hubert Robert, <i>Petit déjeuner de Geoffrin</i>
William Heath Robinson, <i>How to dispense with Servants in the Dining Room</i>
L.M. Vanloo, <i>Choiseul-Stainville</i>
Y. Velten, <i>Salle à manger blanche</i>

**Yale University**

<i>Beinecke</i>	Grand Tour Diaries and other travel manuscripts in the James Marshall and Marie-Louise Osborn Collection  Gaston Pierre, duc de Lévis, Papers of the duc de Lévis, 1741-1780  <i>James Douglas, earl of Morton, Papers of the earl of Morton, 1745-1807</i>
<i>Franklin</i>	<i>Largest collection of private papers of Benjamin Franklin</i>
<i>The Horace Walpole Collection</i>	<i>Papers</i>

*Letters between Vichy du Deffand and duchesse du Choiseul, 1761-1780*

*Letters between Horace Walpole and Vichy du Deffand*

*Letters between Horace Walpole and George A. Selwyn, 1765-1780*

*Bound Letters from Horace Walpole to Vichy du Deffand, bound*

*Journal of Vichy du Deffand*

*Recueil de divers ouvrages, 'Portraits'*

*Oeuvres de Monsieur le Chevalier de Boufflers*

*Recueil de Lettres Choisies de Différentes Personnes, including Aïssé, Aydie, Beauvau, and Vintimille*

*Letters of Gaspard Vichy, Nicolas, Comte de Champrond, 1699-1781*

*Paris Journals of Horace Walpole*

*Letters from Monsieur de Boufflers to Marie Vichy du Deffand, 1772*

*Memoir of Vichy and his family*

*Recueil de Montesquieu*

*Letters of George Augustus Selwyn*

### ***Objects***

*Portrait of dog that Vichy du Deffand gave to Horace Walpole*

*Portrait of Vichy du Deffand by Carmontelle*

*Snuffbox, with image of Tonton, that Vichy du Deffand gave to Horace Walpole*

*Tea set that Horace Walpole gave to Vichy du Deffand*



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